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GLEANINGS OF PAST YEARS,

1843–78.

BY THE RIGHT HON.

W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.

VOL. I.

THE THRONE, AND THE PRINCE CONSORT;
THE CABINET, AND CONSTITUTION.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET,
1879.

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PREFACE.

THESE occasional productions extend over the long term of thirty-six years: years eminently anxious, prolific, and changeful.

No attempt has been made to bring compositions, suggested in various degrees by the time as well as by the subject, into the precise forms of thought or expression, which at this date I might have been inclined to choose for them. Such an effort, in impairing their identity, would abate the limited interest or value which can alone belong to them.

Any changes made have been as follows:—

1. Corrections of typographical errors.
2. Verbal amendments, with a view to simplicity and clearness.
3. Substitutions, in a very few instances, of phrases which juster taste might at the time have suggested; without any alteration of the thought.
4. Cases, also very rare, in which on any special ground it seemed right to specify a change, smaller or greater, in opinion.

These last cases alone are of any even the smallest

importance; and, that the reader may clearly perceive them, they are dealt with in Notes, and the date of 1878 is attached.

Essays of a controversial kind, whether in politics or religion, and classical essays, are not included in the collection.

W. E. G.

HAWARDEN, *December* 1878.

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I.

DEATH OF THE PRINCE CONSORT.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT MANCHESTER ON THE 23RD OF APRIL, 1862, BEFORE THE ASSOCIATION OF LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.*

1. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Although the duty in which we have just been engaged is a cheerful one, the season at which I come among you is, but too notoriously, a season of gloom in the district, and even in the city. In this busy region, all the forms of human industry are grouped around one central stock, which gives them their vitality; and they droop and come near to dying when, as now, the great cotton harvest is no longer wafted over the Atlantic to employ and feed the people. If the positive signs of distress do not glare in your streets, it is, I apprehend, because the manly and independent character of the Lancashire workman makes him unwilling to parade, or even to disclose, his sufferings before his fellow-men. None can doubt the existence of a torpor scarcely ever equalled in its intensity, and wholly without parallel in its cause. At points of the horizon in these counties, the

* Published in 1862. This Address was delivered shortly after the death of the Prince Consort; and during the pressure of the Cotton-famine.

eye suggests regret even for the unwonted thinness of the canopy of smoke, which bears witness to the partial slumber of the giant forces enlisted in your ordinary service. Rarely within living memory has so much of skill lain barren, so much of willing strength been smitten as with palsy; or has so much of poverty and want forced its way into homes that had long been wont to smile with comfort and abundance. Nor is the promise of to-morrow a compensation for the pressure of to-day. On the contrary, if the present be dark, the signs of the immediate future may seem darker still.

2. In times like these the human mind, and still more the human heart, searches all around for consolation and support. Of that support one kind is to be found in observing that trials the most severe and piercing are the lot not of one station only but of all. And perhaps in the wise counsels of Providence it was decreed that that crushing sorrow which came down as sudden as the hurricane, scarcely yet four months ago, upon the august head of our Sovereign, should serve, among other uses, that of teaching and helping her subjects to bear up under the sense of affliction and desolation, and should exhibit by conspicuous example the need and the duty both of mutual sympathy and mutual help. In many a humble cottage, darkened by the calamity of the past winter, the mourning inhabitants may have checked their own impatience by reflecting that, in the ancient Palace of our Kings, a Woman's heart lay bleeding; and that to the supreme place in birth, in station, in splendour, and in power, was now added another and sadder title of pre-eminence in grief.

3. For perhaps no sharper stroke ever cut human lives asunder than that which in December last parted, so far

as this world of sense is concerned, the lives of the Queen of England and of her chosen Consort. It had been obvious to us all, though necessarily in different degrees, that they were blest with the possession of the secret of reconciling the discharge of incessant and wearing public duty with the cultivation of the inner and domestic life. The attachment that binds together wife and husband was known to be in their case, and to have been from the first, of an unusual force. Through more than twenty years, which flowed past like one long unclouded summer day, that attachment was cherished, exercised, and strengthened by all the forms of family interest, by all the associated pursuits of highly cultivated minds, by all the cares and responsibilities which surround the Throne, and which the Prince was called, in his own sphere, both to alleviate and to share. On the one side, such love is rare, even in the annals of the love of woman; on the other, such service can hardly find a parallel, for it is hard to know how a husband could render it to a wife, unless that wife were also Queen.

4. So, then, She, whom you have seen in your streets a source of joy to you all, and herself drinking in with cordial warmth the sights and the sounds of your enthusiastic loyalty, is now to be thought of as the first of English widows, lonely in proportion to her elevation and her cares. Nor let it be thought that those who are never called to suffer in respect to bodily wants therefore do not suffer sharply. Whereas, on the contrary, it is well established, not only that though the form of sorrow may be changed with a change in the sphere of life, the essence and power of it remain, but also that, as that sphere enlarges, the capacity of suffering deepens along with it, no less than the opportunities of enjoyment are

multiplied. Therefore all the land, made aware, through the transparent manner of it, what was the true character of her life, has acknowledged in the Queen not only a true, but a signally afflicted mourner. And rely upon it that, even in the midst of desolation, she is conscious of our sympathy, and has thrilled more deeply to the signs of her people's grief on her behalf than ever, in other days, to their loudest and most heart-stirring acclamations.

5. And you, my friends, such of you in particular as have felt by your firesides the touch of this most trying time: if perchance many among you, turning in the day of need and trouble to the Father of all Mercies, have mingled with your prayers for your own relief another prayer, that She may be consoled in her sorrow and strengthened for her work during what we hope will be the long remainder of her days, that loyal prayer will come back with blessing into your own bosom, and in the effort to obtain comfort for another you will surely be comforted yourselves.

6. If the mourning of the nation for the Prince Consort's death was universal, yet within certain precincts it was also special. One of those precincts surely must have been the Association to promote whose purposes we are gathered here to-night. You had in him a Head; and a Head standing towards you in no merely titular relation, but one who, as his manner was, gave reality to every attribute of his station, and, in lending you his name, imparted to you freely of his thought and care to boot. His comprehensive gaze ranged to and fro between the base and the summit of society, and examined the interior forces by which it is kept at once in balance and in motion. In his well-ordered life there seemed to be room for all things—for every manly exercise, for the study and practice of art, for the exacting cares of a splendid

Court, for minute attention to every domestic and paternal duty, for advice and aid towards the discharge of public business in its innumerable forms, and for meeting the voluntary calls of an active philanthropy: one day in considering the best form for the dwellings of the people; another day in bringing his just and gentle influence to bear on the relations of master and domestic servant; another in suggesting and supplying the means of culture for the most numerous classes; another in some good work of almsgiving or religion. Nor was it a merely external activity which he displayed. His mind, it is evident, was too deeply earnest to be satisfied in anything, smaller or greater, with resting on the surface. With a strong grasp on practical life in all its forms, he united a habit of thought eminently philosophic; ever referring facts to their causes, and pursuing action to its consequences. Gone though he be from among us, he, like other worthies of mankind who have preceded him, is not altogether gone; for, in the words of the poet—

> "Your heads must come
> To the cold tomb;
> Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in their dust."*

So he has left for all men, in all classes, many a useful lesson, to be learnt from the record of his life and character.

7. For example, it would, I believe, be difficult to find anywhere a model of a life more highly organised, more thoroughly and compactly ordered. Here in Manchester, if anywhere in the world, you know what order is, and what a power it holds. Here we see at work the vast

* Shirley, 'Ajax and Ulysses,' Scene iii.

systems of machinery, where ten thousand instruments are ever labouring, each in its own proper place, each with its own proper duty, but all obedient to one law, and all co-operating for one end. Scarcely in one of these your own great establishments are the principles of order and its power more vividly exemplified, than they were in the mind and life of the Prince Consort. Now this way of excelling is one that we all may follow. There is not one among us all here gathered who may not, if he will, especially if he be still young, by the simple specific of giving method to his life, greatly increase its power and efficacy for good.

8. But he would be a sorry imitator of the Prince who should suppose that this process could be satisfactorily performed as a mechanical process, in a presumptuous or in a servile spirit, and with a view to selfish or to worldly ends. A life that is to be active like his ought to find refreshment even in the midst of labours; nay, to draw refreshment from them. But this it cannot do, unless the man can take up the varied employments of the world with something of a childlike freshness. Few are they who carry on with them that childlike freshness of the earliest years into after-life. It is that especial light of Heaven, described by Wordsworth in his immortal 'Ode on the Recollections of Childhood': that light—

> "which lies about us in our infancy,"

which attends even the youth upon his way; but at length—

> "the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day."

Its radiance still plays about a favoured few: they are those few who, like the Prince, strive earnestly to keep

tl.emselves unspotted from the world, and are victors in the strife.

9. In beseeching, especially, the young to study the application to their daily life of that principle of order which both engenders diligence and strength of will, and likewise so greatly multiplies their power, I am well assured that they will find this to be not only an intellectual but a moral exercise. Every real and searching effort at self-improvement is of itself a lesson of profound humility. For we cannot move a step without learning and feeling the waywardness, the weakness, the vacillation of our movements, or without desiring to be set up upon the Rock that is higher than ourselves. Nor, again, is it likely that the self-denial and self-discipline which these efforts undoubtedly involve will often be cordially undergone, except by those who elevate and extend their vision beyond the narrow scope of the years—be they what we admit to be few, or what we think to be many—that are prescribed for our career on earth. An untiring sense of duty, an active consciousness of the perpetual presence of Him who is its author and its law, and a lofty aim beyond the grave—these are the best and most efficient parts, in every sense, of that apparatus wherewith we should be armed, when with full purpose of heart we address ourselves to the life-long work of self-improvement. And I believe that the lesson which I have thus, perhaps at once too boldly and too feebly, presumed to convey to you in words, is the very lesson which was taught us for twenty years, and has been bequeathed to us for lasting memory, by the Prince Consort, in the nobler form of action, in the silent witness of an earnest, manful, and devoted life.

10. But, although this world embraces no more than a limited part of our existence, and although it is certain

that we ought to tread its floor with an upward and not with a downward eye, yet sometimes a strong reaction from the dominion of things visible and carnal begets the opposite excess. A strain of language may sometimes be heard among us which, if taken strictly, would imply that the Almighty had abandoned the earth and the creatures He had made; or, at the least, that if He retained any care at all for some portion of those creatures while continuing to be inhabitants of the world, it was only care how to take them out of it. It is sometimes said that this world is a world only of shadows and of phantoms. We may safely reply that, whatever it is, a world of shadows and of phantoms it can never truly be; for by shadows and by phantoms we mean vague existences, which neither endure nor act: creatures of the moment, which may touch the fancy, but which the understanding does not recognise; passing illusions, without heralds before them, without results or traces after them. With such a description as this, I say, our human life, in whatever state or station, can never correspond. It may be something better than this; it may be something worse, but this it can never be. Our life may be food to us, or may, if we will have it so, be poison; but one or the other it must be. Whichever and whatever it is, beyond all doubt it is eminently real. So surely as the day and the night alternately follow one another, does every day when it yields to darkness, and every night when it passes into dawn, bear with it its own tale of the results which it has silently wrought upon each of us, for evil or for good. The day of diligence, duty, and devotion leaves us richer than it found us; richer sometimes, and even commonly, in our circumstances; richer always in ourselves. But the day of aimless lethargy, the day of

passionate and rebellious disorder, or of a merely selfish and perverse activity, as surely leaves us poorer at its close than we were at its beginning. The whole experience of life, in small things and in great, what is it? It is an aggregate of real forces, which are always acting upon us, we also reacting upon them. It is in the nature of things impossible that, in their contact with our plastic and susceptible natures, they should leave us as we were; and to deny the reality of their daily and continual influence, merely because we cannot register its results, as we note the changes of the barometer, from hour to hour, would be just as rational as to deny that the sea acts upon the beach because the eye will not tell us to-morrow that it is altered from what it has been to-day. If we fail to measure the results that are thus hourly wrought on shingle and in sand, it is not because those results are unreal, but because our vision is too limited in its powers to discern them. When, instead of comparing day with day, we compare century with century, then we may often find that land has become sea, and sea has become land. Even so we can perceive, at least in our neighbours—towards whom the eye is more impartial and discerning than towards ourselves—that, under the steady pressure of the experience of life, human characters are continually being determined for good or evil; are developed, confirmed, modified, altered, or undermined. It is the office of good sense, no less than of faith, to realise this great truth before we see it, and to live under the conviction, that our life from day to day is a true, powerful, and searching discipline, moulding us and making us, whether it be for evil or for good.

11. Nor are these real effects wrought by unreal instruments. Life and the world, their interests, their careers,

the varied gifts of our nature, the traditions of our forefathers, the treasures of laws, institutions, usages, of languages, of literature, and of art; all the beauty, glory, and delight with which the Almighty Father has clothed this earth for the use and profit of His children, and which Evil, though it has defaced, has not been able utterly to destroy; all these are not merely allowable, but ordained and appointed instruments for the training of mankind. They are instruments true and efficient in themselves, though without doubt auxiliary and subordinate to that highest instrument of all which God has prepared to be the means of our recovery and final weal, by the revelation of Himself.

12. Thus, then, we arrive at a point which plainly exhibits the ennobling tendencies and high moral aims of an institution such as this, when it is worked in the spirit that alone befits our nature and condition.

Let me now address to you a few words on a marked feature of the institution—that feature with which in particular we are to-night concerned—I mean its examinations, to which reference is made in the eighth paragraph of its printed list of its objects. They evidently form not only a living and chief portion of its practice, but also a test of its power over the people; and it is manifest, from the results they have produced—from such results as with our own eyes we have witnessed in this hall to-night—that they have struck deep root in the mind of the community around you, and are likely to exercise in future a material influence upon conduct.

13. The use of examinations in this country, not alone, but with honours and prizes variously attached to them, as a main stimulus and support to mental cultivation, is in a very great degree peculiar to the present century.

Examination on trial, in one form or another, may be said to have constituted, nearly from its commencement, the basis of the practical system of our ancient Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Perhaps those Universities have been the means of commending to the country the example it has so largely followed. These examinations have acquired progressively more and more of weight in our famous public schools. They now supply the only passport to the Civil Service of India, richly endowed as it is with emoluments, and heavily charged with duties and responsibilities. Admission to the Civil Service at home had been long the subject only of a political patronage which was, erroneously as I think, believed to be an essential part of the machinery of the Constitution, and the sole effectual substitute for the ruder methods of government formerly in use by prerogative or force. But it is now in some degree admitted that the privilege of entering the Civil Service of the country—and, indeed, the service of the country generally ought to be thrown open, as widely as may be, to its youth at large. And some progress has been made, by the method of examinations, both in securing the State against the intrusion of the unworthy, and in widening the way of access for those who aspire to prove themselves worthy of the honours and rewards of civil office. The like engine of competitive examination has been more freely applied to the highest—I mean the scientific—department of the army. At about the same time with the adoption of these last-mentioned improvements, the University of Oxford instituted, with great wisdom and forethought, that system of circuits for local examinations throughout the country which met at once with public acknowledgment and approval, and which was speedily and happily

imitated from one or more other quarters. But none of these efforts touched the great masses of the people. They too, however, have been at least partially reached by the widening circles of the movement. A proposal is, as you know, under the consideration of Parliament, which aims at the establishment of the principle, that the merit of the pupils proved by elementary examination shall henceforth be, if not the sole, yet the main condition on which the money of the State, supplied by the taxes of the country, shall be dispensed in aid of primary schools. This, it may be said, is still prospective. But at least we have, in the Association of Lancashire and Cheshire Mechanics' Institutes, one living proof of the progress made, without aid either from old endowment or from the public purse, by the principle of examinations, with the condition of competition, and with the attraction of honour or reward. How strictly true is this assertion must be more familiarly known to many among you than to me.

14. I will not attempt to draw here, and now, a full picture of the association, but will only give in proof of what I have said a very few facts and figures. First, as regards the general condition of the district. We find that the involuntary leisure forced on the population by the contraction of the cotton trade has been attended by a decrease of crime. In Blackburn, for instance, where the crisis is felt with the utmost severity, the charges heard by the borough magistrates in the first quarter of the year 1857 were 721; in the first quarter of the year 1862, although the population must have grown, the charges were only 524. Now, we may naturally expect a decrease of drunkenness to accompany popular distress, because the means of indulgence have been contracted. But, on the other hand, we might not

be greatly surprised if there were a positive increase of those offences to which men are tempted in a principal degree by want. Applying these considerations to the case of Blackburn, we find the following results. The charges other than for drunkenness in the first quarter of 1857 were 464; in 1862 they were 380. There is, my friends, consolation in these facts, which I hope will long survive the painful occasion that has brought them into view.

15. It also appears from the returns, that, speaking generally, while crime has decreased, the attendance upon classes, and the use of the means of mental culture, have increased. Now, my friends, there are beautiful and famous passages in ancient writers, where statesmen and orators describe the refreshment with which literature had supplied them, amid the cares of life and the pressure of public affairs. Without any disparagement to such representations, it is a far more touching picture to behold the labouring man, shut out by no fault of his own from the occupation that gives him bread, yet unconquered in spirit and resource, and turning to account his vacant hours in pursuits which strengthen and enlarge the faculties of his mind.

16. It would, however, be unjust to set down to the credit of this Association, or of those institutes which it binds together, more than a modest share in the general improvement of your social state. But let us observe more closely their actual progress. The members, formerly 2000, are now from 6000 to 8000. Four years ago, 500 persons passed the preliminary examinations; this year there are 1500. Four years ago, 214 passed the public and final examination; this year there are 730. What is more remarkable than all the rest is the fact that,

of 180 persons who have to-night received honours and certificates, the number who draw their subsistence from weekly wages is no less than 177. Two of these are wholly unemployed; 83, between men and women, are weavers; fully 150 appear to belong, in the very strictest sense, to the labouring class. Again I say, here are the signs, for that class especially, of hope and real progress; of hope which will, I trust, bear its fruit, and abide with them when ripened into certainty, long after the clouds of the present visitation shall, if it please God, have passed away.

17. I have said to you, my friends, that the extended use of the instrument of examinations is eminently characteristic of the age in which we live. I would almost venture to say that, amid all the material and all the social changes by which the period has been distinguished, there have been few that are greater or more peculiar than this. The older methods of education, which had been in use in European countries, generally invited from students, with more or less of strictness, voluntary performances, which were intended to afford general evidence of competency; and which, where they were regularly exacted, were made conditions of the certificates of proficiency given by Universities and other learned bodies, and by them called Degrees. These exercises and exhibitions were the invention of remote ages, and were in all probability well adapted to the exigencies of those periods. But in the time of your immediate ancestors they had become generally and even grossly ineffective; and the instinct, so to speak, of the present age has prompted it, instead of reviving the ancient forms which had died out, to have recourse to the new method of examinations.

18. These examinations are in a great number of

instances competitive; that is, they offer to the candidates one or more specific prizes, the possession of which by particular competitors involves the exclusion of others. This form of examination has great advantages. It raises to a *maximum* that stimulus which acts insensibly but powerfully upon the minds of students, as it were, from behind; and becomes an auxiliary force augmenting their energies, and helping them, almost without their knowledge, to surmount their difficulties. It is not found in practice, so far as I know, to be open to an objection which is popularly urged against it; this, namely, that it may elicit evil passions among the candidates, because it makes the gain of one the loss of another. I believe that, on the contrary, the pursuit of knowledge is found to carry with it, in this respect, its own preservatives and safeguards. Even in athletic sports, the loser does not resent or grudge the fairly won honours of the winner; and, in the race of minds, those who are behind, having confidence in the perfect fairness of the award, are not so blindly and basely selfish as to cherish resentment against others for being better than themselves. Again, it is a recommendation of purely competitive examinations that they bring the matter to the simplest issue; for, in nice cases, it is a much easier and safer task for the examiner to compare the performances of a candidate with those of another candidate, than to compare them with some more abstract standard, existing only in his own mind. On the other hand, it is a disadvantage of this system that the honours given at different times, purporting to be equal, are given to unequal merit: for the number and excellence of the competitors varies from one occasion to another; and the winner of one year may, on this account, be inferior to the loser of another.

19. Much may, in truth, be said in praise or in disparagement of one method of examination as compared with another. Into controversy of this kind I do not propose to enter, further than to say that I think the highest value belongs to the competitive species in cases like that of admission to the Civil Service of the State, where a main object is to bar the way against the action of corrupt or inferior motives in those who appoint. In the long-run, the simple, clear, and self-acting method of an open competition will probably be found more adequate than any other agency to contend against the wakeful energies of human selfishness, ever on the alert, first to prevent the adoption of improvements, and then to neutralise and mar their operation.

20. But what I would, on the present occasion, specially endeavour to bring to your attention is the general character of this instrument of examination, as it is understood and as it is applied in the present century, and in the institution with which we have now to deal. The essential character of it I take to be this—that the candidate, instead of himself producing a piece of work, and asking to be judged by it, offers and opens his mind to the examining authority to be tested, searched, and, so to speak, even ransacked, in such manner, and by such questions and processes, as that examining authority shall choose. The adoption, or wide extension, of such a method as this marks an epoch in the history of study. It shows that we have overlived the time when the greater part of those who engaged in the pursuit of knowledge were enamoured of its beauty, and loved it for its own sake, with a devout and tender love. In the childhood of mental culture, it was the prerogative of a few, and the mere possession of it constituted a high distinction. So, likewise, as in those

days legal rights were ill defined and protected, commerce was circumscribed, nations were sharply severed, and but few of the careers of active life were open, it naturally happened that, in the case of many persons, mental culture had little to compete with for their regard. In circumstances like these, it might not be needful constantly to apply a strong stimulus from without. The very novelty and freshness of knowledge, in ages just emerging from darkness and disorder, gave it a powerful charm for the imagination, over and above its hold upon the intellect; it was pursued by a spontaneous movement from within, with passion as well as with conviction; and those who so pursue it do not need to be goaded in their onward course; their service is a service of love, and, like the love of youth for maiden, it is its own incentive and its own reward.

21. But when society has passed into what is distinctively, and in many respects truly, termed a progressive state; when the personal rights of men are as secure in the outer world as in the closest retirement; when a thousand new careers of external life are opened, and its attractions in a thousand forms are indefinitely multiplied; when large numbers can engage, not merely in labour for subsistence, but in the pursuit of wealth; and when a desire to rise upon the social ladder takes possession of whole classes, if not on their own behalf, at least on behalf of their children; then there arises a compound danger. First, lest the value of knowledge for its own sake should be wholly forgotten; and, secondly, lest even its utility in innumerable respects for the comfort and advancement of life should pass, in great measure, out of view.

22. Now, my friends, it is in such an age as this that we are living. That same attraction or necessity of wages,

which takes the poorer child, either in town or village, from school at too early a period, is but the exhibition for one class of a pressure felt by all. With the wealthier it is pleasure, with the needier it is gain; but all classes and all circles are alike in this, that our youth are in danger of undervaluing solid mental culture, and of either neglecting or shortening its pursuit by reason of the increased allurements, or the more urgent calls, of the outer sphere of life. Although knowledge is in so many ways auxiliary to art and to commerce, yet this is a matter not so palpable to the individual that we can rely on it to enable him, as it were, to speculate upon a distant benefit, which concerns others as well as, or it may be more than, himself; and to forego for its sake advantages which lie nearer at hand, which appertain directly to his own career, and which are on the level of every man's understanding. Long, accordingly, after trade and manufactures had begun, one hundred years ago, their upward spring, education and art seemed rather to decline than to advance among us. At length a day of awakening came. Christian philanthropy, we may do well to remember, was first in the field on behalf of the masses of the people; but after a while, it found itself in partnership with an enlightened self-interest on the part of individuals, and with the political prudence of the Government. Now, for a long course of years, all three have prosecuted their work in remarkable harmony one with another. Long may their union continue, and its golden fruits teem and glow over all the surface of the land!

23. A principal form, in which they have well developed their united activity, has been the form of examinations; and I must in candour say that, among all the particular

applications of this principle, I have seen none more remarkable than that which we have met to-night to commemorate and to encourage. For here it is not leisure, wealth, and ease which come to disport themselves as athletes in intellectual games: it is the hard hand of the worker, which his yet stronger will has taught to wield the pen; it is Labour, gathering up with infinite care and sacrifice the fragments of time, stealing them, many a one, from rest and sleep, and offering them up, like so many widows' mites, in the honest devotion of an effort at self-improvement.

24. There are those, my friends, who tell us that examinations, and especially that competitive examinations, are of no real value; that they produce the pretence and not the reality of knowledge; that they give us, not solid progress, but conceit and illusion. I freely admit that this modern method is likely to rear, as far as we can judge, no greater prodigies of learning than did the simple and spontaneous devotion of the olden time; perhaps, if we are to look only at individual cases of pre-eminence, none so great. But I say that the true way to imitate the wisdom of the olden time is this: to watch the conditions of the age in which we live; to accept them thankfully and freely, as at once the law of Providence for our guidance, and the gift for our encouragement: and when we learn by experience that the tools with which other generations wrought are not suited for the work that is given us to do, then to find, if we can, some other tools which are.

25. It is not too much to say that the experience of half a century, as well in the Universities as elsewhere, appears to have shown that the method of examinations is the best, and perhaps the only, method by which, in the

England of the nineteenth century, any due efficiency can be imparted to the general business of education. I do not, indeed, deny that a certain trick or craft may be practised in them; that some may think more of the manner of displaying their knowledge to a momentary advantage, like goods in a shop-window, than of laying hold upon the substance. But I say that these abusive cases will be the exceptions, not the rule. I say that those who so unjustly plead them against the system forget that this very faculty, of the ready command and easy use of our knowledge, is in itself of immense value. It means clear perception, it means orderly arrangement. And, above all, they forget what I take to be the specific and peculiar virtue of the system of examinations, namely this, that they require us to concentrate all the faculties of the mind, with all their strength, upon a point. In and by the efforts necessary for that concentration, the mind itself, obtaining at once breadth of grasp and increased pliability and force, becomes more able to grapple with great occasions in the subsequent experience of life.

26. Therefore, my friends, again I say let us accept frankly and cheerfully the conditions of the age in which our lot is cast, and let us write among its titles this—that as it is the age of humane and liberal laws, the age of extended franchises, the age of warmer loyalty and more firmly established order, the age of free trade, the age of steam and railways; so it is likewise, even if last and least, the age of examinations. Let me add, it is the age in which this powerful instrument of good, formerly the exclusive privilege of the more opulent, has been extended, perhaps most conspicuously of all by this group of institutions, to the people. And I give you this for my concluding word; that, if that Prince of whose bright career and character

I lately spoke were now among us, none, we may be sure, would more cordially than he claim honour for a system which, in such thorough harmony with the whole spirit of English laws and institutions, aims at enabling every one, in every rank of the social scale, the lowest like the highest, to give proof of what mettle he is made, and to turn to the best account the gifts with which, by the bounty of his Heavenly Father, his mind has been endowed.

II.

LIFE OF THE PRINCE CONSORT—COURT OF QUEEN VICTORIA.*

Vol. I. London, 1875.

1. The day which announced throughout the land the death of the Prince Consort was a day of universal gloom. The heart of the nation was touched by the suddenness with which indisposition had assumed the face of danger, and interest had grown into alarm; and there was a prescient observation, at an early stage of the illness, that the constitution of the illustrious patient did not seem to offer that stout resistance to the advances of disease which his favourable age, and his tall, manly, well-proportioned form would have seemed to insure. The purity of his life, the integrity of his character, his varied talents and accomplishments, and the active share in public undertakings, so often and so judiciously assumed, had gradually acquired for him a strong and deep hold upon the esteem of the British people. But the depth of that sympathy and sorrow which accompanied the catastrophe was probably a tribute to the sorrow of the Queen, in a yet greater degree than to the signal merits of her husband. It was felt, by a just instinct, that love and loss conjointly had

* 'Life and Speeches of the Prince Consort—Court of Queen Victoria' (by Etonensis). Published in the *Contemporary Review*, June 1875. Republished for circulation abroad in one of the volumes of Baron Tauchnitz, Leipzig, 1876.

perhaps never, amidst all the varieties of life, been raised to so high a pitch: that no woman had ever leant more fondly, and no queen had ever had so much cause to lean. The weight was now doubled; while the strength was halved, and the joy and comfort gone. Accordingly, there was a real and genuine desire of the whole people to be partners in her great affliction, in no conventional or secondary sense, but by truly bearing a portion of it along with her. I speak neither wholly nor even peculiarly of the highest circles. On the contrary, the sentiment deepened, as it widened, with every step downwards from class to class, even to the very base of society.

2. To the same mixed feeling, with the same dominant reference to the Sovereign, may have been partly due the remarkable multiplication in all quarters of the local Memorials, which by degrees covered the land. With respect to the most conspicuous of these, the gorgeous structure near the western extremity of Hyde Park, it may perhaps be said that its extraordinary magnitude of scale and sumptuousness of execution may in future days be deemed to assert a greater superiority to other mortals, on behalf of the Prince Consort, than even his pure and lofty reputation can be expected to sustain. In any case, we may say of him with truth what the greatest Italian poet of this century, Giacomo Leopardi, has said of Dante:—

> "Io so ben . . . . . .
> Che saldi men che cera, e men ch' arena,
> Verso la fama che di te lasciasti,
> Son bronzi e marmi."*

Happily we have sure memorials of his mind, and faith-

* Rudely and slightly rendered in the following lines:—
"Matched with the fame
Of thy great name,
[Bronze

ful chroniclers of his history; and it may be confidently expected, while it must be ardently desired, that not only our own time, but future generations also, may continue to prize the recollection of a life lifted far above the ordinary level of princely existence, and not only meritorious, but even typical for nations and men at large.

3. Before taking notice of the work of Mr. Martin,* we must briefly refer to the two other offerings of loyal commemoration which were already before the world.

In 1867 General Grey compiled, under the direction of Her Majesty, a memoir of 'The Early Years of the Prince Consort,' from 1819, the year of his birth, to the birth of the Princess Royal in 1840. Originally prepared for private circulation, it was afterwards given to the public; and the intended prosecution of the work was announced in the closing sentence of the volume. But, no long time afterwards, the hand of the writer was cold in death. The work of General Grey was even more communicative, threw even more light upon the personal histories and the domestic interior, than the later biography. He had been chosen to discharge a labour of love, implying on the part of his Sovereign the highest confidence. Never was that confidence better deserved. Besides possessing the other qualities needed for his important functions, he was a man loyal with no common loyalty; and his long standing at the Court gave him the power, which younger men cannot

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Bronze is but wax,
And Marble sand,
To baffle Time's attacks,
And stealthy hand."

From G. Leopardi, 'Sopra il monumento di Dante che si preparava in Firenze.'

* 'Life of the Prince Consort,' vol. i., 1875.

be expected equally to possess, of acting in all points the part of a faithful friend. The "fierce light that beats upon a throne" is sometimes, like the heat of that furnace in which only the Three Children could walk unscathed, too fierce for those whose place it is to stand in its vicinity. The incidents of a Court retain, down to our day, their fascination, and we are old-fashioned enough to hope it may not soon be lost; yet it can hardly be denied that it is girt about with a relaxing atmosphere, and that a manful constitution, or adequate refreshment from other sources, is required in order to secure a robust health, in mind and character, to its favoured residents. Had the bodily strength of General Grey been equal to his mental soundness and manly truthfulness of stamp, he would still have been among us, with many coming years of usefulness to reckon.

4. A more recent, but not less loyal or judicious, relation to the throne, was that of Sir Arthur Helps; whose death we have been called, within the last few months, to mourn. So early as in 1862, he had been chosen to edit the Speeches of the Prince; and he had prefixed to them a most able and most discriminating introduction, only second in interest to the Speeches themselves. These were eagerly and extensively read by the nation; and they unquestionably have that in them which ought not to die.

5. It was much that, after the removal by death of these two admirable servants of the Crown, Her Majesty should be able to select for the definite execution of a task hitherto only attempted in fragments a biographer of such high qualifications as Mr. Martin. He has brought to the execution of a task necessarily arduous the same fine hand and accurate discernment with which he had previously rendered the image of some of the best Latin poets,

in the guise of happy and elegant English translations. It is, however, unnecessary for us, writing many months after the appearance of the work, to repeat in detail the praises which have been justly, and more promptly, awarded to Mr. Martin already by authoritative and respected organs of the periodical press.* We have only to wish that he may continue as he has begun. Perhaps we should add the expression of a hope that the nature of his subject-matter may not again impose upon him any such necessity of entering largely into the detail of foreign policy as he encountered in the painful case of the Spanish marriages. Even the valuable documents and the authentic history he has here furnished want something of the charm of a biography. But the interest of the Royal portrait, which it has been Mr. Martin's duty to draw, is one not to be exhausted with the run of a successful work. The study and contemplation of the MAN will remain permanently fruitful of the most improving lessons to every learner in the school of human nature. The whole action of the Prince, in its manifold relations both to English society and to the constitution of the country, still forms a subject of deep interest to all who are interested either in free institutions generally, or in the peculiar form of them under which we live. And the amount of calamity we have suffered by his death has, perhaps, not even yet been fully apprehended.

6. It is not our intention to enter largely into the narrative of a life of which the general features are so well and widely known; especially as we cannot doubt that Mr. Martin's work will in no long period obtain access to a wider circle of readers, through republication in a popular

* *Quarterly Review* for January 1857, pp. 108–110.

form, than is permitted by its present size and price. But we shall carefully select our points of reference. And there is one anecdote of the Prince's childhood, recorded by Count Arthur Mensdorff, which exhibits in very early times the base, so to speak, of his character.

"One day, when we children, Albert, Ernest, Ferdinand, Augustus, Alexander, myself, and a few other boys, were playing at the Rosenau, and some of us were to storm the old ruined tower on the side of the castle, which the others were to defend, one of us suggested that there was a place at the back by which we could get in without being seen, and thus capture it without difficulty. Albert declared 'that this would be most unbecoming in a Saxon knight, who should always attack the enemy in front.' And so we fought for the tower, so honestly and vigorously, that Albert, by mistake, for I was on his side, gave me a blow upon the nose, of which I still bear the mark. I need not say how sorry he was for the wound he had given me." *

7. The boy was father of the man; and from the high standard which he had thus early, and thus earnestly, presented to himself, he never deviated. He was also happy, beyond almost all other men, in the aids which he received. His education seems to have been conducted with all the care, the steady direction of means to an end, the determination to turn all minds and all faculties to the very best account, which distinguishes the Germans beyond any people of Europe. It seems as though there were no disturbing element of waste in their moral and intellectual world; and this extraordinary and noble thrift early became a governing principle, and a great power, in the life of the Prince Consort.

8. But he had higher advantages even than those of a careful and elaborate training, in the constant and affec-

* Mr. Martin, p. 7; General Grey, p. 57.

tionate attention of two men, each in himself remarkable, and both devoted in an extraordinary measure to his welfare, as well as to that of the Queen, with whom in a long vista of anticipation we are told that his destiny was almost from the very first conjoined (Martin, p. 14). They were men not only of great gifts, but singularly adapted for their work of wardenship.

9. One of them was King Leopold, Prince of Saxe-Coburg by birth, sovereign of Belgium by a happy selection and adoption. This sovereign must undoubtedly be reckoned among the great statesmen of the nineteenth century. As a monarch, he gave a living example of all the lessons which are to be learned from the free institutions of the world, and some part of which, at least, he may have originally gained from his association with, and residence in, England. Called to the throne under circumstances more menacing than those of his neighbour and father-in-law, Louis Philippe, he lived in prosperity and died in honour, while the heir of the more splendid lot closed his days in obscurity and in exile. And it may not be an unreasonable opinion that, had France been governed from 1830 onwards with the enlightened frankness of King Leopold, the Orleans dynasty might still be on the throne, and Alsace and Lorraine still might bear the *insignia* of France;

"Trojaque nunc stares, Priamique arx alta maneres."

The column of the Place Vendôme would not be in ruins, nor the Hôtel de Ville in ashes.

Married in early life to Princess Charlotte of England, he stood in the line of succession to the very same position which his nephew, Prince Albert, was afterwards to hold. By the early death of that princess, which was so deeply

and, as is now known in the light of later disclosures,* so deservedly lamented, the cup was dashed from his lips. But, without doubt, the exact reproduction of the same situation, for others so near and dear to him in the next generation, must have heightened in his mind that interest in their well-being which his relationship of itself could not but inspire, and which the early death of the Duke of Kent (in 1820) gave him an appropriate opportunity of bringing into action with reference to the Princess Victoria.

10. One of his great acts of tutelary friendship was to bring upon the scene Baron Stockmar, a person who was to contribute as directly, and perhaps with a yet larger effect, to the safe and happy direction of the Prince's life. Copious memoirs† of the Baron were printed three or four years back by his son, in German, and were translated into English. But, notwithstanding their near association with persons and matters so interesting to the nation, they did not take any extended hold of the public mind. The almost idolising ardour of filial affection in the author of the book failed to redeem a number of errors in point of taste and propriety. Fortunately the character of the person commemorated was so high as to survive and surmount the injudicious and obtrusive commemoration. In the pages of Mr. Martin, Baron Stockmar appears in his just place and relation to things and persons; which of course is not that of the Olympian Zeus of modern Europe. Of great and cultivated gifts, he was a man absolutely disinterested, not merely in the sense of superiority to

* See *Quarterly Review* for Jan. 1873, Art. 1: a memoir, not a criticism.

† 'Memoirs of Baron Stockmar.' By his son, Baron E. von Stockmar. Translated from the German by G. A. M. Longmans, 1872.

pecuniary inducement, but in the power of casting, as it were, himself out of himself, so as to attain a complete identification with those on whose behalf he advised or acted, for all the purposes to which the advice or action might belong. To a fearless independence he added, as Mr. Martin truly says, a penetrating judgment of men and things (p. 15), and an inexhaustible fund of devotion. Eminently cosmopolitan in the framework of his mind, he was free from national limitations; and was able both to appreciate for himself,* and to instil into another in a remarkable degree, the true character of the British Constitution, a product of our insular soil which is not only without a parallel, but in its subtler parts almost without analogy elsewhere. It is commonly seen, by even the most intelligent of foreigners, as pictures are seen in gas-light, with a strong projection of their more glaring colours, and a total, or at best very serious, loss of their more delicate, cool, transparent shadows and graduating touches. From 1816 to 1831 the Baron had been resident in England as the private secretary of Prince Leopold, and the comptroller of his household. He had also acted as the organ and representative of the Prince in the difficult negotiations which followed his acceptance of the Belgian crown; and which were well qualified, as may be seen by the readers of the recent 'Life of Lord Palmerston,' to exercise and develop the capacity of any man for statesmanship. Retiring to Coburg in 1834, he obeyed in 1836 a new call of King Leopold for his aid, and became a main agent in the happy and wise conspiracy, of which the King was probably the first author, for dis-

* See, for examples, Martin, vol. i. pp. 110, 111. But the subject recurs *inf.* No. III., pp. 75 *sqq.*

posing all circumstances towards the marriage of the young Prince Albert with the future Queen of England, and for fitting him to adorn the exalted station. The succession of Princess Victoria had now no contingent impediment in its way; and it was time to make preparation for smoothing her arduous upward path with the best of all appliances.

11. The plan in view was bold, but not more bold than wise. It evidently was to make a preparation ideally perfect, but yet to leave choice as entire and free as if there had been no preparation whatever. A golden halo of romance thus invested the early life of these young and illustrious persons. The whole narrative really recalls the most graceful fictions of wise genii and gentle fairies, besetting mortals with blessings, and biassing their fates to bliss. It was as where the highest skill combines with bounteous soil and beneficent climate to secure the golden harvest. There never can have been an instance in which public and domestic aims were more thoroughly harmonised; though there have been so many where the human hearts and lives of Royal persons have been as lightly sacrificed as if they had been creatures doomed to vivisection in the interests of science or of curiosity.

12. This comprehensive forethought did not fail to secure even a political reward. The palaces of England became shrines of domestic happiness; and the Court exhibited to the nation and the world a pattern of personal conduct, in all the points most slippery and dangerous for a wealthy country, with a large leisured class, in a luxurious age. Idleness was rebuked by the unwearied labours of the highest persons in the land; vulgar ostentation grew pale in the face of a splendour everywhere associated with

duty, and measured by its ends; impurity could not live in so clear an atmosphere; even thrift had its tribute of encouragement, where hospitalities truly regal and unwearied were so organised as not to put disdain upon the homely unattractive duty of living within an appointed income. All these personal excellences were seen and appreciated by the public; and they contributed, perhaps no less than wise legislation, and conduct inflexibly constitutional, to draw close the ties between the people and the throne.

13. The culminating point of the interest with which the life of the Prince Consort should be regarded is one at which it is really inseparable from the associated life of the Queen. They are ideally the obverse and reverse of the same medal; nay, actually, the several moieties of the same whole. And, thus considered, they supply the one normal exhibition of a case in which the Woman-ruler of a great empire, herself highly endowed with both character and intelligence, has rested as it were on the background of another consummately accomplished existence, and has enjoyed the benefit of all its qualities, and all its energies, as amply as if they had belonged to her own original store. Happy marriages, it may be thankfully acknowledged, are rather the rule among us, than the exception; but even among happy marriages this marriage was exceptional, so nearly did the union of thought, heart, and action both fulfil the ideal, and bring duality near to the borders of identity. Not uncommonly, the wife is to the husband as the adjective is to the substantive. And beyond doubt the great faculties and comprehensive accomplishments of Prince Albert fully entitled him to claim a husband's place. But the husband's place was in this case modified by the position.

The Prince exactly appreciated the demands of the throne upon its occupant, and the consequential demands of his wife upon himself. He saw that it was his duty to live in, for, and through her, and he accepted with a marvellous accuracy of intellectual apprehension, and with an unswerving devotion of his heart, this peculiarly relative element in a splendid existence.

14. On one occasion, at least, he was led to describe in words* his own life-long function. In the year 1850, nearly at the point of bisection of his married life, the Duke of Wellington strongly urged upon him that he should assume the office of Commander-in-Chief. In this recommendation we see at once one of the many instances of the Duke's enthusiastic attachment to the Sovereign, and an undoubted indication of faculties tending to decline with the lapse of years. The characters of the Queen and of the Prince stood so high, that the first announcement of his acceptance of such an office might have given pleasure. But every man acquainted with the spirit of Parliamentary government must at once have seen it to be indefensible, and in a high degree inconvenient. It is, indeed, to be desired that a very close relation of sentiment between the Sovereign and the Army should be permanently maintained. But the Army is, after all, a great department of the State; and departments of the State can only be administered in this country by persons responsible to Parliament. There are, indeed, some features in the office which recommend that its contact with Parliament should be mediate, and not direct. The discipline of the Army is a subject so grave, so delicate, and associated at such a multitude of points with the

* Speeches, p. 76.

interests and feelings of the governing class, that it should be as little as possible exposed to the influence of Parliamentary pressure; a pressure nowadays much more apt to be exercised in the interest of class than in that of the public. The responsibility, therefore, of the Commander-in-Chief is covered by that of the Secretary of State. But this protection is not exemption; and the authority of Parliament is entire with respect to the military as well as the official head. Now, the responsibility of public officers in these days does not usually clothe itself in the hard material forms of impeachments and attainders, as it did in other times. It is sufficiently sustained and enforced, for the most part, through the immensely quickened action of opinion, and through an increased susceptibility to its influence. The *ultima ratio* with us is no longer fraught with peril to life, liberty, or estate, but simply means removal from office. This power, however, is indispensable; and the case of the Duke of York may serve to show that it is no mere phantom. But it is quite plain that no such power could have been exercised, or even discussed, in reference to the husband of the Queen, without affecting the Throne; to which he was so closely related, that whatever injured the one must have brought the other more or less into question. Now, in such a matter, there should be no more and less. It follows that, whatever might have been the guarantees afforded by his character for wise and unimpeachable conduct, there was a radical and incurable fault in the Duke's suggestion. The Prince could not fulfil the very first among the conditions of fitness for the office: he could not be removable.

15. Yet, how great was the temptation to an active mind, conscious of the capacity, and filled with the desire

to render service to the nation, for once at least to seize the opportunity of claiming to give that service in a form in which it would bring the valuable reward of a daily and palpable appreciation. The recommendation, thus attractive in itself, proceeded from a Statesman of fourscore, and from the man who, of all the land could boast, stood first in the public estimation. It might well have been mistaken for a safe proposal. We doubt whether a merely intellectual superiority would have saved the Prince from this serious danger; this trap, laid in innocence by most friendly hands. But his intellectual superiority was backed by a noble power of moral self-denial. And so he found his way to the heart and root of the matter. In a letter to the Duke, he describes the position of the "female sovereign," and proceeds as follows:—

"This requires that the husband should entirely sink his own individual existence in that of his wife; that he should aim at no power by himself or for himself; should shun all ostentation; assume no separate responsibility before the public; but make his position entirely a part of hers, fill up every gap which, as a woman, she would naturally leave in the exercise of her regal functions, continually and anxiously watch every part of the public business, in order to be able to advise and assist her at any moment, in any of the multifarious and difficult questions or duties brought before her, sometimes international, sometimes political, or social, or personal. As the natural head of her family, superintendent of her household, manager of her private affairs; sole *confidential* adviser in politics, and only assistant in the communications with the officers of the Government; he is, besides the husband of the Queen, the tutor of the royal children, the private secretary of the Sovereign, and her permanent Minister."

16. In this admirably large description we seem to find but one venial error of a word. It is not in the epithet

confidential; for though this very phrase, by the usage of the Constitution, belongs to the successive bodies of her advisers, it is manifestly applicable with perfect propriety to the Prince, in a distinct, and in a much higher than the official sense. It is in the word Minister. Minister to the Queen he could not be, because his conduct was not within the reach and control of Parliament. But, in fact, the word is too weak to convey the character of the relation between his mind and the mind of the Queen. He was to her, in deed and truth, a second self.

17. Much more, then, than a personal interest (high as in such a case the personal interest is) attaches to this great example. On the Queen, as a woman, was laid a *maximum* of burden. The problem was to find for her a corresponding *maximum* of relieving aid. The relation of the Prince to the Queen was really an experiment in the science and art of politics for the civilised world. Its success was complete: if it had failed, not England, but the civilised world would have been the loser. For the part sustained by the Monarch in the system of this extended Empire still remains a great matter, and not a small one.

18. The weighty business of kingship has in modern times been undergoing a subtle and silent, yet an almost entire transformation; and, in this country at least, the process has reached its maturity. Neither the nature nor the extent of this change appear as yet to have become familiar to the ordinary run of observers. The name of the Queen was still the symbol, and her office the fountain, of all lawful powers; Royalty was seen and felt among us, until the darkening shadow of widowhood fell upon the august head, by the people of every rank and class, with unusual frequency, and in a splendour never

surpassed by the habit of preceding Sovereigns. Many, then, did not advert to the fact that the character of the regal office had been altered, while those who believed in the change for the most part believed also that this great function was now emptied of its force, and reduced to an illusion. Both were alike in error; in an error which it is not easy to correct by a summary description. The nearest approach to an account combining truth and brevity would perhaps be found in the statement, that while in extent the change has been, at least inwardly, nothing less than a transformation, its substance may chiefly be perceived in a beneficial substitution of influence for power.

19. Not that even power is entirely gone. The whole power of the State periodically returns into the Royal hands whenever a Ministry is changed. This resumption is usually brought about by forces distinct from the personal action of the Sovereign. The day when George IV., in 1829, after a struggle, renewed the Charter of the Administration of the day, and thereby submitted to the Roman Catholic Relief Act, may be held to denote the death of British Kingship in its older sense, which had in a measure survived the Revolution of 1688, and had even gained in strength during the reign of George III. The endeavour of King William IV., in 1834, to assert his personal choice in the appointment of a Ministry without reference to the will of Parliament, gave to the Conservative party a momentary tenure of office without power. But, in truth, that indiscreet proceeding of an honest and well-meaning man produced a strong reaction in favour of the Liberals, and greatly prolonged the predominance which they were on the point of losing through the play of natural causes. Laying too great a stress on the

instrument of Royal will, it tended not to strengthen the Throne, but to enfeeble it.* Such was the upshot of an injudicious, though undoubtedly conscientious, use of power.

20. The case was very different when the pressure, not of Royal will, but of Parliamentary difficulties, brought about the first resignation of the Melbourne Government in 1839, and what was called the Bedchamber question arose. It was a question whether the ladies of the Court, who had been politically appointed, should or should not retire from office. The Queen, not yet twenty years old, but capable of contracting attachments at once quick and durable, resisted the demand. There can be no doubt that if Sir Robert Peel had been allowed at that time to proceed with his task, the Ministry he would then have formed would have been possessed of reasonable stability. But the power of the young Sovereign, applied with the skilful use of opportunity, sufficed to prolong the duration of the Liberal Government until the summer of 1841, a period of nearly two and a half years. Its exercise produced, at the time, no revulsion in the public mind. The final judgment upon the conduct of the parties to the crisis has been more favourable to the Minister than to the Monarch. Baron Stockmar himself has expressed this opinion. But the question specially involved was the claim of the woman in her early youth. It was a claim of which, confined within certain limits, equity would surely have recommended the allowance. Possibly it was suspicion, the most obstinate among the besetting sins of politicians, even in men of upright nature, which interfered on the side of rigour. The justice of the case has, we think, been expressed in the

* But see *inf.* No. III., p. 78, on this rather complex matter.

arrangement which has now long prevailed. The Mistress of the Robes, who is not periodically resident at the Court, but only an attendant on great occasions, changes with the Ministry: the Ladies in Waiting, who enjoy much more of personal contact by virtue of their office with the Sovereign, are appointed, and continue in their appointments, without regard to the political connections of their husbands.

21. The record of the transaction, given in Hansard,* rests mainly upon two letters, one from the Queen, and the other from Sir Robert Peel; and these two letters do not fully harmonise in their representation of the facts. The Queen, in her letter, mentions, and refuses, the proposal of Sir Robert Peel "to remove the ladies of her Bedchamber." Sir Robert Peel, in his answer, speaks only of his desire to remove a portion of them; and in the same letter declines to prosecute the task of forming a Ministry. Hence it appears that he abandoned that undertaking to construct a Government upon a decision of the Queen's, which is not the decision announced by her. She declined to remove them as a body; he resigns his charge, because he is not allowed to remove a few among them. It is very difficult to understand why he did not dispel, if only for his own sake, the misapprehension under which the Queen's letter may have been written. At present the documentary evidence only shows that Her Majesty refused an unreasonable demand; and that he retired from his high position because he adhered to a demand which, whether necessary or not, was not unreasonable. If in truth the matter turned upon Her Majesty's resistance to this narrower request, it is quite

* Vol. xlvii. pp. 984 *sqq.*

possible that it was an error on the one side to press the request to extremity, and on the other to refuse it. Had it been upon the wider stipulation, all would surely have admitted that there was full warrant for the refusal.

22. We have dwelt upon the case, because it affords the most recent illustration of the successful exercise of Royal power, and, on this account, bears a character of historical importance. The thirty-six years which have since elapsed have been undisturbed even by a single shock in the relations between the Sovereign and her Government, which has changed its head no less than twelve times without the slightest jolt or friction in the play of the machinery. But although the admirable arrangements of the Constitution have now completely shielded the Sovereign from personal responsibility, they have left ample scope for the exercise of a direct and personal influence in the whole work of government. The amount of that influence must vary greatly, according to character, to capacity, to experience in affairs, to tact in the application of a pressure which never is to be carried to extremes, to patience in keeping up the continuity of a multitudinous supervision, and, lastly, to close presence at the seat of government; for, in many of its necessary operations, time is the most essential of all elements, and the most scarce. Subject to the range of these variations, the Sovereign, as compared with her Ministers, has, because she is the Sovereign, the advantages of long experience, wide survey, elevated position, and entire disconnection from the bias of party. Further, personal and domestic relations with the ruling families abroad give openings, in delicate cases, for saying more, and saying it at once more gently and more efficaciously, than could be ventured in the more formal correspondence, and

ruder contacts, of Governments. We learn from the volume of Mr. Martin with how much truthfulness and decision, and with how much tact and delicacy, the Queen, aided by the Prince, took a principal part, on behalf of the nation, in the painful question of the Spanish marriages. Instances so very conspicuous as this may be rare; but there is not a doubt that the aggregate of direct influence normally exercised by the Sovereign upon the counsels and proceedings of her Ministers is considerable in amount, tends to permanence and solidity of action, and confers much benefit on the country, without in the smallest degree relieving the advisers of the Crown from their undivided responsibility.

23. But we doubt whether even this very important function of the Sovereign in watching, following, and canvassing policy, be not less important than the use which may be made of the vast moral and social influence attaching personally to the occupant of the throne. This is a power exercised upon the ordinary relations of life, and greatly through the ceremonial and hospitalities of a Court.

Little are they who gaze from without upon long trains of splendid equipages rolling towards a palace conscious of the meaning and the force that live in the forms of a Monarchy, probably the most ancient, and certainly the most solid and the most revered, in all Europe. The acts, the wishes, the example, of the Sovereign in this country are a real power. An immence reverence and a tender affection await upon the person of the one permanent and ever faithful guardian of the fundamental conditions of the Constitution. She is the symbol of law; she is by law, and setting apart the metaphysics, and the abnormal incidents, of revolution, the source of power. Parlia-

ments and Ministries pass, but she abides in life-long duty; and she is to them as the oak in the forest is to the annual harvest in the field. When the august functions of the Crown are irradiated by intelligence and virtue they are transformed into a higher dignity than words can fully convey, or Acts of Parliament can confer; and traditional loyalty, with a generous people, acquires the force (as Mr. Burke says) of a passion, and the warmth of personal attachment. But by those to whom we are attached, we are ready and prone to be, nay, we are already, influenced.

24. This power, inherited with the place, will ever prove to have been husbanded and enlarged in strict proportion to the discharge of duty: and is independent of all personal contact, strictly so called, between Sovereign and subject. But the personal contact of the Sovereign with the subject, under favourable circumstances, such as those which the Prince so greatly contributed to form, is of very considerable extent. We do not now speak of local visits or special relations to a class such as the Army; or of participation in the amusements of the people, as at theatres, or balls, or concerts. And yet these are not to be despised; nay, it may be taken for granted, that the presence and interest of the Sovereign in these recreations tend to expel from them vulgarity, to reduce in many points the capricious excess of fashion, and generally to make their quality better than it would tend to become under other auspices, by giving a distinct and high sanction to the efforts of those who are ever striving to raise the level (for example) of the musical and dramatic arts. But we must likewise take more particularly into view what is more strictly in the nature of personal contact. To come under the roof of the Sovereign, to partake the hospitalities of the Sovereign, to be

admitted, even for moments only, to the converse of the Sovereign, all these are things of meaning. The converse, the hospitalities, the very place, all in their different degrees constitute powers, and give scope for influence: for influence, which all that is good, as well as something of what is bad, in English society tends to enhance. These things make their mark; and the mark is usually durable.

25. With us, society is passing under many subtle yet vital changes. It must never be forgotten that wealth is now in England no longer the possession of a few, but rather what is termed "a drug." That is to say, it is diffused through a circle so much extended, and so fast extending, that to be wealthy does not of itself satisfy; and the keenness of the unsatisfied desire, aspiring selfishly not to superiority, but rather to the marks of superiority, seeks them pre-eminently in the shape of what we term social distinction. But the true test of the highest social distinction, in this country, is nearness to the Monarch; and all this avidity for access, for notice, for favour, expresses an amount of readiness to conform, to follow, to come under influence, which may often be indifferent enough in quality, but is very large in quantity.

26. But, quite apart from these more questionable elements, it must be borne in mind that the society of this country is hierarchically constituted. It is not here as it was in the Court of Louis Napoleon, where there was as much, or more, of splendour and display, but where the influence exercised by personal contact terminated in those who were its immediate objects, because they were often the mere members of a clique, and wire-pullers of political intrigue, never the natural, traditional, accepted heads, or teachers, of society. At the Court of Queen Victoria it was otherwise. Those who came within the magic

circle were persons every one of whom was more or less himself a power: the chiefs of the professions, the leaders of Parliament, the Patriarchs of letters, the Primates of art, and, as was natural and right, in larger measure than any other class, the aristocracy of the land, themselves having, in so many instances, the double title of inherited station and high personal distinction. Even in dealing with these distinguished orders of men, a principle of selection was not forgotten; and it became evident that, without invidious severances, the Court preferred in every class those who were the best in that class, and leant to passing by those less eligible. Thus the whole force of Royal example and authority was given to good; and given in the most efficacious manner. The preferences of the Court silently exhorted to right conduct all who were within their reach, and strongly discountenanced its opposite. This was their operation within the necessary limited class, to which alone close personal intercourse could by possibility extend.

27. But it was a very small part of their whole operation. Of the planets which wheel round the sun some are themselves wheeled round by other and secondary stars. The Court touched, in the strictest sense, only the select men of the country; but of these every one was himself a centre of influence by example, by exertion, by mental activity, it might be by all combined; and each transmitted what he had derived, as one billiard ball carries on the stroke to another, or as the circles widen on the water. Many readers may find something of paradox in what we are now saying; but we venture to believe that it is because they have not taken occasion to make the subject a matter of careful study and observation. Among the things least understood, and most sadly under-esti-

mated, in the world, are the force of example, and the silent influences of leadership. In our social system, so marked by the dovetailing of classes, the quality of receptivity for these influences is raised to its *maximum*, and they pass from the summit even to the base. We do not hesitate to express a firm conviction that the Court of Queen Victoria was a sensible and important element in the group of forces which, for two or three decades of years, raised in so beneficial a manner the social and moral tone of the upper classes of this country, although the upward movement they received has of late years not been sustained, if, indeed, the tide has not for some time been ebbing. Supposing this to be true, then that Court was a great fact in history; if at least history is to be a picture, and not only a signboard. We may also say that its imposing exterior, its regular and many-sided action, and its accurate and refined adjustments, made it a work of art. Of all this the Prince was, and could not but be, the organising and directing mind. Amply charged with political labour and its moral responsibilities, the Queen was thus provided with an appropriate relief; and in one important sphere of action all things moved, for her, automatically. The quantity of what is expected from a Sovereign, in a state of society like ours, is double and quadruple of what the working force of a single mind and will can readily supply. By the Prince's close union with the Queen, and by his energy, his method, and his judgment, the motive power was at once doubled, while from the close harmony of the two, singleness of impulse and operation was fully maintained.

28. We have, in these pages, rather endeavoured to bring into view what we think to have been the less observed parts of the Prince's action, than dwelt upon such forms

of his useful activity as are better known. Instinctively remote from ideology, he had an energetic tendency towards social improvement in every form, and herein especially towards those reformatory schemes which were calculated to bring into view new modes of coping with social mischief; as well as those which tended to raise the level of culture and to refine common life by the habits and appliances of art. When the subjects of his care and attention are brought together, they form a whole so formidable in amount, that the mind is struck and almost shocked at the lavish expenditure of brain-power which they must have required, amidst all that splendour which is readily mistaken for ease by the careless beholder; and wonder becomes less, as pain becomes more, at that sapping and exhaustion of vital forces, which probably made openings for disease, and prepared him to succumb to it in the early maturity of his manhood.

29. But in truth the form of self-sacrifice practised by the Prince seems to be the prime, and perhaps the only, way in which, under the circumstances of modern times, the nobleness of the Royal character can be sustained. The changes which have affected the position of Sovereigns and their families among us are in many respects fraught with moral danger, and with temptation in peculiar forms, not easily detected. Of old, the King had all his splendours and all his enjoyments weighted by the heavy cares, and very real and rude responsibilities, of government; and "uneasy lay the head that wore a crown." It was a truth as old as the time of Troy, when other gods and warriors slept, but Zeus alone was wakeful.* Thus it was that power, and luxury, and, what is far more insi-

* Iliad, ii. 1. Comp. x. 1–4.

dious, flattery, were then compensated and kept in check. In the British Monarchy, the lodgment of the various parts of this great whole, making up a King's condition, is changed, and their moral equilibrium put in jeopardy. There are still gathered the splendours, the enjoyments, all the notes of homage, all the eager obedience, the anticipation of wishes, the surrender of adverse opinions, the true and loyal deference, and the deference which is factitious and conventional. To be served by all is dangerous; to be contradicted by none is worse. Taking into view the immense increase in the appliances of material ease and luxury, the general result is, that in the private and domestic sphere a Royal will enjoys at this epoch, more nearly than in any past generation, the privileges of a kind of omnipotence. At the same time, the principal burden of care, and all responsibility for acts of administration, and for the state of the country, is transferred to the heads of others, and even the voice of the lightest criticism is rarely heard. In these circumstances it remains singularly true, that the duties of a Court entail in their full scope a serious and irksome task, and that there must be much self-denial, and much merit, in their due discharge. But it is also in other duties, principally remote from the public eye, that the largest scope is afforded for the patient and watchful labour in public affairs which, balancing effectually mere splendour and enjoyment, secures the true nobleness of kingship against the subtle inroads of selfishness, and raises to their maximum at once the toil, the usefulness, and the influence of the British Throne. Never, probably, under any circumstances, be they favourable as they may, can these reach a higher point of elevation than they had attained by the joint efforts, and during the married life,

of the Queen and the Prince. Nor can we well overvalue that addition of masculine energy to female tact and truth which brought the working of British Royalty so near the standard of ideal excellence.

30. We proceed to some matters more exclusively personal to the Prince. A German by birth, he never lost the stamp of Germany; no true man can wholly lose the stamp of his own country. A mildly foreign mark upon his exterior and manner, together with the perpetual presence of a manifest endeavour to turn every man's conversation, every man's particular gift and knowledge, to account for his own mental improvement, most laudable as it was, yet may have prevented his attaining that charm of absolute ease in his intercourse with the world which he is known to have possessed in the circle of his family. They certainly retarded the growth of his popularity among the wealthy and the great, who are, and may, we fear, always remain, not the least censorious among the several classes of society.

31. The precocity of the Prince seems to have been not less remarkable than were his solidity and his many-sidedness. In this respect, indeed, all Royal persons enjoy such advantages, through the elaborateness of their training, the devotion of those who surround them, and their large opportunities of contact with the choicest minds, that almost in all cases they seem to exhibit a number of the signs of maturity much earlier than do those in a less exalted station. What was specially noteworthy about the Prince was, that in his precocity there was nothing showy, or superficial, or transitory. Though he had hardly crossed the threshold of manhood when he arrived among us, he gave no signs of crudity, never affected knowledge he did not possess, never slackened in, and never concealed, that

anxiety to learn which seemed to accompany as much his social leisure as his working hours. There seemed, again, to be no branch of human knowledge, no subject of human interest, on which he did not lay his hand.

32. This early and multitudinous development, which received a share of assistance from the incidents of Royalty, and which in him nature had supremely favoured, however dazzling and however real in the advantages it supplies, has likewise at least one great drawback. It is not favourable to the energetic concentration without which the human mind can hardly reach to greatness, and of which it is plain that he was eminently capable. It is impossible to say what growth may have been reserved for the Prince during his later years; but some of the most remarkable and complete among the Speeches—which constitute, after all, his very best memorial—belong to the earlier portion of the series; and it might be difficult to assign to the later moiety of it any marked superiority over the first. The circumstances of his life may have thwarted the bias of nature; but undoubtedly these Speeches seem to show the exercise, in a very remarkable degree, of the three combined faculties of terseness in expression, of concentrated attention, and of completeness in thought.

33. At the age of thirty, in 1850, he delivered a speech which contains one of the very best descriptions of the mind and character of Sir Robert Peel. This description is, among its other features, highly sympathetic. It betokens a real intimacy; and there is no other of the same stamp. In truth, the character of Peel, in some intellectual and many moral qualities, was not without pointed resemblance to his own.* His short speech at the meeting

* Speeches, pp. 121–4.

of the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy, in 1854, affords a remarkable example of handling at once succinct and exhaustive.* The speech at Birmingham, for the Midland Institute, in 1855,† and the speech at Aberdeen, for the meeting of the British Association, are excellent. But to our mind the Prince never surpassed in comprehensiveness, in his fearless truthfulness, and in delicacy of touch and handling, his address at the festival of the Royal Academy, in 1850, when he was still but thirty. After treating of the character of Sir Charles Eastlake, he proceeds to the general subject:—

"Gentlemen, the production of all works in art or poetry requires in their conception and execution, not only an exercise of the intellect, skill, and patience, but particularly a concurrent warmth of feeling and a free flow of imagination. This renders them most tender plants, which will thrive only in an atmosphere calculated to maintain that warmth; and that atmosphere is one of kindness —kindness towards the artist personally, as well as towards his production. An unkind word of criticism passes like a cold blast over their [qy. these] tender shoots, and shrivels them up, checking the flow of the sap, which was rising to produce, perhaps, multitudes of flowers and fruit.

"But still, criticism is absolutely necessary to the development of art, and the injudicious praise of an inferior work becomes an insult to superior genius.

"In this respect our times are peculiarly unfavourable, when compared with those when Madonnas were painted in the seclusion of convents. For we have now, on the one hand, the eager competition of a vast array of artists of every degree of talent and skill, and on the other, as judge, a great public, for the greater part wholly uneducated in art, and thus led by professional writers, who often strive to impress the public with a great idea of their own artistic knowledge by the merciless manner in which they treat works which have cost those who produced them the highest efforts of mind or feeling.

* Speeches, pp. 146-8. † *Ibid.* p. 162.

"The works of art, by being publicly exhibited and offered for sale, are becoming articles of trade, following, as such, the unreasoning laws of markets and fashion; and public and even private patronage is swayed by their tyrannical influence." *

In these evils he finds the ground for the existence of the Academy, which has done much to deserve the public confidence, but yet to which he does not hesitate frankly to point out its own besetting danger.

34. We pass on to a still higher matter. Where so warm and so wide an interest is felt in one departed, there cannot but be much desire to know what, in this agitated and expectant age, was his mental attitude with respect to religion. On this great subject there has been some degree of reserve, which we should be the last to blame; for at a time of sharp division, and of much fashionable scepticism as well as bigotry, loving hands, such as those which tend the Prince's memory, are little likely to expose a cherished reputation to the harshest and most penetrating forms of criticism. For the public, however, the matter has now become one of history. The nation knew, during the lifetime of the Prince, all, perhaps, that it had a right to know. They knew that he was a religious man. In his earliest youth,† at the period of his confirmation, to which, in Germany, a peculiar character attaches, he declared with energy his resolved adoption of the Christian profession. To its public duties he paid a regular homage. His life was known to be of a pure and severe morality, of an incessant activity in duty, of an exemplary tone in the various domestic relations. The confidence of the country, won upon these grounds, was sealed by the obvious presence of a determined and even

* Speeches, p. 123. † Martin, p. 10.

far-reaching Protestantism.* The Prince was friendly to an equality of civil rights independent of religious profession; but with such a frame of opinion for himself, and with his marked earnestness of character, a certain degree of theological narrowness, inherited rather than personal, may have formed an ingredient in his views of the religious system of the Latin Church, even when considered apart from its latest and most extravagant developments, of which he lived to witness some bold beginnings.

35. So far as can be gathered incidentally from those who find admittance to the inner circles, not much is to be added to the outline which met the public eye. Nothing has been learned to show that his mind was deeply impressed with the value or the particulars of dogmatic orthodoxy. With his refined culture, he could not but repel the crude vulgarities which sometimes discharge themselves from the pulpit, and lurk in forms of popular religion; and it is extensively believed that the Church owes to the Prince's influence and suggestion the appointment of the able Prelate who fills the see of Worcester, in substitution for a person of more popular and showy type, but of far less learning, capacity, and governing force. What was more than this was the conviction, which all intercourse with the Prince conveyed, as to his own ruling notions of daily conduct. His life was, in truth, one sustained and perpetual effort to realise the great law of duty to God, and to discharge the heavy debt which he seemed to feel was laid upon him by his high station, and by the command of the means and sources not less of usefulness than of enjoyment. As a watch wound up

* Speeches, p. 10.

obeys its mainspring till it has all run out, so he, at all moments, seemed to be answering the call of an inward voice, summoning him to learn, to think, to do, to bear. In all ranks and forms of life this is a noble, an edifying spectacle; and it is more noble and edifying in proportion as the elevation is greater, and the object visible from a wider range.

36. Some religionists will be tempted hereupon to say how sad it was that one who came so near to the kingdom of God should not have entered in. Some will simply hold the description we have given to be that of a dry self-righteousness, which cannot stand in the day of account. A third class, whose doubts and scruples would command more of our sympathy, would ask themselves how it was that a man who thus earnestly and faithfully set himself to do the divine will did not accordingly appreciate at their fullest value those specific revelations of truth, in the form of doctrines and institutions, which Christians in general have accepted as the most effectual sources of regenerative power, both for the individual, as established by personal experience, and for society, as written on the long scroll of history during eighteen centuries. But this opens a question alike broad and deep, and we can only glance for a moment along the *vista*.

37. Let us endeavour to sketch a frame of religious sense and conviction different from that of the Prince. We take a human soul profoundly conscious of the taint and power of sin; one given to the contemplation of the character of Christ, and shocked at its own immeasurable distance from the glorious image of the Master; one pained, not only with the positive forms of corruption, but with the pervading grief of general imperfection and unworthiness, and with the sense how the choicest por-

tions of the life strangely run to waste, how the best designs are spoiled by faulty actuation, how there are tears (in the touching language of Bishop Beveridge) that want washing, and repentance that needs to be repented of. Such an one feels himself engaged in a double warfare, against evil without, and against evil within; and finds the last even fiercer than the first. To deprive one so minded of any fraction of what are termed the doctrines of grace, of such lights as shone upon the souls of Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, and Saint Bernard, is to drain away the life's blood of the spirit, and lay him helpless at the feet of inexorable foes. For a nature such as this, religion is not only a portion or department of conduct, but, by a stringent necessity, the great, standing, solemn drama or action of life; that in which all mental powers, and all emotions of the heart, are most constantly and intensely exercised; and the yearnings, efforts, and conflicts which belong to the external order are as nothing compared with those which are to God-wards.

38. But, as in the Father's house there are many mansions, so there are vast diversities in the forms of character He is preparing to inhabit them. However true it may be that all alike have sinned, it is far from true that all have sinned alike. There are persons, though they may be rare and highly exceptional, in whom the atmosphere of purity has not been dimmed, the forces of temptation are comparatively weak, and at the same time the sense of duty is vigorous and lively. Hence the temper which trusts God and loves Him as a Father is not thwarted in its exercise by habitual perversity, nor associated with so crushing a sense of the sinfulness that debars us from approach to Him, or of the need of a Saviour, and a Sacrifice, and of the gift and guidance of the Holy Spirit

working in us that we may have a good will, and with us when we have that good will. Persons such as these, ever active in human duty, need not be indifferent about religion; on the contrary, they may be strongly religious. They may, as the Prince did, condemn coldness, and commend fervour.* They may "give their heart to the Purifier, their will to the Will that governs the universe;" and yet they may but feebly and partially appreciate parts of Christian doctrine; nay, they may even, like Charles Lamb, the writer of these beautiful and powerful words, hold themselves apart from its central propositions. So it may come about that the comparative purity of a man's nature, the milder form of the deterioration he inherits, the fearless cheerfulness with which he seems to stand and walk in the light of God's presence, may impair his estimate of the warmer, more inward, and more deeply spiritual parts of Christianity. Further, they may altogether prevent him from appreciating the Gospel on its severer side. He may generously give credit to others for dispositions corresponding with his own: and may not fully perceive the necessity, on their behalf, of that law which is made, not for the righteous, but for the ungodly and the profane, of those threatenings and prohibitions wherewith the Gospel seeks to arrest reckless or depraved spirits in their headlong course, to constrain them to come in, and to rescue them as brands from the burning. In a word, he may unduly generalise the facts of his own mental and moral constitution.

39. We do not admit that the dissent, or only faint or partial adhesion, of these exceptional human beings to the ancient creed of the Christian Church detracts from

* Speeches, pp. 132, 134.

its just authority; but we should be slow to charge the inadequacy of their doctrinal conceptions upon moral defect, or to deny the truth, force, and value of the heart-service which they may and do render, and render with affectionate humility, to their Father and their God. The Christian dogma is the ordained means of generating and sustaining the religious life; but the Almighty is not tied to the paths He marks out for His servants, and we are nowhere authorised to say there can be no religious life except as the direct product of the Christian dogma in its entirety.

40. We might, if space permitted, exhibit largely another class of cases, where the reception of the Gospel seems to be determined to a particular and by no means normal form of conditions of personal character. There is a highly popular kind of Christian teaching, which dwells more or less congenially within the precincts of various communions, and of which it is the distinguishing characteristic, that while it retains and presents, with some crudity, the doctrine of the Fall, an Atonement by substitution, the intensity of sin, and the final condemnation of the wicked, it reduces the method of deliverance to a formula of extreme simplicity. A certain reception of Christ, not easy to describe psychologically, is held to be the only door to spiritual life. It conveys a salvation in itself immediate and complete; and not only entails the obligation, but supplies the unfailing motive for walking in the way of Christian obedience towards moral perfection. Purity of mind and natural balance of character supplied us, in the case formerly presented, with the key to the problem; whereas the doctrinal scheme now before us rather commends itself to those who are suddenly awakened to a sense of gross neglect or transgression, and who are

in this sense at least childlike, that the elements of their characters are few and simple, and their minds unused to what is profound, or delicate, or complex. A summary presentation and settlement, so to speak, of the religious account between God and the soul, is that which most accords with the general form of their mental habits. These two distinct modes of apprehending religion, so much contrasted, seem to have in common the important points that each may be sincere, and for the individual efficient, but that neither have the solidity necessary for continuous transmission: and the likelihood is, that a great share of the efficacy they possess is derived from that general atmosphere of Christianity in which we live, and much of which we may unconsciously and without moral choice (προαίρεσις) inhale.

41. We proceed to quote from the Speeches a passage addressed to a conference on education in 1857, which distinctly testifies not only to the earnest piety of the speaker, but to his clear and advised convictions:—

"Our Heavenly Father, in His boundless goodness, has made his creatures that they should be happy, and His wisdom has fitted His means to His ends, giving to all of them different faculties and qualities, in using and developing which they fulfil their destiny, and, running their uniform course according to the prescription, they find that happiness which He has intended for them. Man alone is born into this world with faculties far nobler than the other creatures, reflecting the image of Him who has willed that there should be beings on earth to know and worship Him, but endowed with the power of self-determination. Having reason given him for his guide, he can develop his faculties, place himself in harmony with his Divine prototype, and attain that happiness which is offered to him on earth, to be completed hereafter in entire union with Him through the mercy of Christ. But he can also leave these faculties unimproved, and miss his mission on earth. He will then sink to the level of the lower animals, forfeit

happiness, and separate from his God, whom he did not know how to find." *

There are men who are religious by temperament, though sceptical in their intellect. Such was not the case of the Prince. He had been trained in Germany under influences rather of the rationalising than the orthodox party, but his religion had a firm ground, as must be manifest from this passage, in his mind not less than in his heart.

42. It will, moreover, as we think, be observed with pleasure that as years rolled on, though the flower of life was still in full blow, an increasing warmth of tone pervaded the Prince's sentiments in this great matter. On an occasion secular enough for such as are disposed so to take it, namely, that of presenting colours in 1859 to a battalion of his regiment, he breaks forth copiously into terms of truly Christian and paternal affection:—

"May God's best blessing attend you, shield you from danger, support you under difficulties, cheer you under privations, grant you moderation in success, contentment under discipline, humility and gratitude towards Him in prosperity." *

43. More than thirteen years have now passed since the Prince was gathered to his fathers: and his character belongs to history. To such a man it is no compliment to treat of him in a strain merely courtly and eulogistic. He will shine most in the colours which the truth supplies: he would have been the first to reject adulation, and to disapprove excess. It is but the naked and cold truth, that we possessed in him a treasure; that he raised the influence and usefulness of our highest institution to its highest point; and that society has suffered

* Speeches, p. 191.

heavily from the slackening of the beneficial action to which he so powerfully contributed.

At Windsor, the noblest and most complete of all the abodes of European Royalty, in the beautiful chapel built by Henry VII. eastward from St. George's, and afterwards given to Wolsey, lies the effigy of the Prince, which will probably stand with the public and with posterity as, in a proper and especial sense, his monument. The outlay by her Majesty upon the interior of the building in the endeavour to bring it up to the standard of her love, must have been very large; and the result is that, without losing its solemnity, it has attained exceeding splendour. Roof and floor, walls and windows, altar and sedilia, ancestral, royal, sacred effigies, marbles sculptured and inlaid in colour, all bear the stamp of a more than queenly magnificence; and the criticism which a very few points might invite with reference to the details of execution may be omitted, lest it should jar with the conspicuous and noble harmony of the work as a whole. The pure white marble figure of the Prince reposing on his altar-tomb, amidst all these glories, vividly presents the image of his stainless character and life, persistently exhibited through all the sumptuous fascination and array of brilliancy which lay along his earthly path.

44. Over the tomb of such a man many tears might fall, but not one could be a tear of bitterness. These examples of rare intelligences, yet more rarely cultivated, with their great duties greatly done, are not lights kindled for a moment, in order then to be quenched in the blackness of darkness. While they pass elsewhere to attain their consummation, they live on here in their good deeds, in their venerated memories, in their fruitful example. As even a fine figure may be eclipsed by a

gorgeous costume, so during life the splendid accompaniments of a Prince Consort's position may for the common eye throw the qualities of his mind and character, his true humanity, into shade. These hindrances to effectual perception are now removed; and we can see, like the forms of a Greek statue, severely pure in their bath of southern light, all his extraordinary gifts and virtues; his manly force tempered with gentleness, playfulness, and love; his intense devotion to duty; his pursuit of the practical, with an unfailing thought of the ideal; his combined allegiance to beauty and to truth; the elevation of his aims, with his painstaking care and thrift of time, and methodising of life, so as to waste no particle of his appliances and powers. His exact place in the hierarchy of bygone excellence it is not for us to determine; but none can doubt that it is a privilege which, in the revolutions of the years, but rarely returns, to find such graces and such gifts of mind, heart, character, and person united in one and the same individual, and set so steadily and firmly, upon a pedestal of such giddy height, for the instruction and admiration of mankind.

III.

LIFE OF THE PRINCE CONSORT.

Vol. II. London, 1876.*

1. THE production of a Biography in a series of single Volumes would not commonly be a safe experiment on the appetite or patience of the public. But, in the present instance, reliance may be placed upon an interest sustained and stimulated by the reason of the case. The whole career of the Prince Consort, and the free exhibition of the life of the Sovereign and the surroundings of the Throne, which the work has involved, form a picture which must be interesting, so long as Britons conceive their Monarchy to be a valuable possession; and must be edifying, so long as they are capable of deriving benefit from the contemplation of virtue thoroughly "breathed" with activity, guided by intelligence, and uplifted into elevated station as a mark for every eye. Mr. Martin's handiwork is well known to the world. It neither calls for criticism, nor stands in need of commendation by way of advertisement. In producing all that can give interest to his subject, free scope seems to have been judiciously allowed him. In one respect only, so far as we can judge, he has been rather heavily weighted in running

* Published in the *Church of England Quarterly Review* for January 1877. Republished at Leipzig, 1877.

his race. Perhaps with a view to gratifying the taste of Royal and ex-Royal readers from Germany, he has found it needful to carry his readers somewhat freely into the labyrinthe details of German politics during the years 1848–50, when the empire was in embryo, and when the attitudes of the various powers and influences at work were imperfectly developed, and for the most part neither dignified nor becoming. The Prince took an active, almost an officious, but a thoroughly patriotic, interest in them; and if he did not find a clew to guide him through the windings, or disclose any signal gift of political prophecy in what he wrote, he, at least, set a good example in his disposition to cast aside the incumbrances of dynastic prejudice, and to hold language which had justice and liberality for its rule. It may seem singular, but we take it to be the fact, that he applies a stronger and sharper insight to the Eastern question, as it emerged in 1853, than to the problems offered to his notice by the land of his birth.

2. The main interest, however, of this Biography, which is, we believe, to secure for it a place in our permanent literature, will not, perhaps be found to lie so much in the treatment of this or that current question of its time, as in the figure and character of the man, as a man, who is its subject; in the light it throws upon the difficult question of his position as a Prince Consort, and in the contribution it supplies towards defining that important position for the future as well as for the past.

3. The excellence of the Prince's character has become a commonplace, almost a by-word, among us. It is easy to run round the circle of his virtues; difficult to find a point at which the line is not continuous. He was without doubt eminently happy in the persons who principally

contributed from without to develop his capacities, and determine his mental and moral, as well as his exterior, life; namely, in his uncle, his tutor, and his Wife. But how completely did the material answer to every touch that it received; how full, round, and complete it was, as a sculpture; how perseveringly and accurately did the Prince apply a standing genial conception of duty and action to the rapid stream, it might be said, the torrent,* of the daily details of life; how much of interest—amidst incessant action, and without the tranquillity necessary for systematic thought—he presents to the class who have no taste for mere action, to the philosophic student; how nearly the life approximates to an ideal; how it seems to lay the foundations for a class and succession of men, if only men could be found good enough, and large enough, to build themselves upon it. Mr. Martin has been impugned by an acute writer* for the uniformity of his laudatory tones. Now, doubtless, it would be too much to expect a drastic criticism of the Prince's intellect in a work produced under the auspices of an adoring affection; but an honest impartiality prompts us to ask whether in the ethical picture here presented to us there really is a single trait that calls for censure. If there is anything in the picture of the Prince that directly irritates the critical faculty, is it not

> "That fine air;
> That pure severity of perfect light,"†

which was insipid to Queen Guinevere in the heyday of her blood, but to which she did homage when the equilibrium of her nature was restored?

4. There can be little doubt that the Prince will be

* *Nonconformist*, Dec. 6, 1876. † Tennyson's 'Guinevere.'

remembered in future generations with something quite different from that formal and titular remembrance, which belongs to his rank in its relation to the Throne, and which is accorded (for example) to Prince George of Denmark. There has not yet been time to determine his exact place among the "inheritors of renown," fulfilled or unfulfilled.* The silly importunity which has urged Pope Pius IX. to dub himself "The Great" was doubly wrong: wrong, as we think, in urging him to clutch at what he will never get: wrong, beyond all question, in requiring him to fabricate at a stroke a title which has not, and, from its nature, cannot have, yet inured: inasmuch as it can only be conferred by the general sense of an impartial, that is, a succeeding age.* For it is thus alone that the phrase acquires its dignity: *securus judicat orbis terrarum.* Manufactured by a contemporary *clique,* it is entitled to no more respect than the forged antiquities which are daily passed off upon the ravenous appetite of collectors. All that we can venture in this case to propound is, that, with every fresh gush of light upon the Prince's personal history, there is a corresponding growth in his claims to admiration and celebrity, and an intimation of his finally taking a higher rather than a lower place among the departed sons of fame.

5. At the same time, it would probably be too much to hope that the third Volume of Mr. Martin will raise the Prince above the second, as the second has, we think, raised him above the first. The period of the Great Exhibition of 1851, which entailed upon him arduous and constant labour, was probably the climax of his career. This narrative appears to establish his title to the honours

* Shelley's 'Adonais.'

of its real origination.* Its nearest analogue in past history would appear to have been the Frankfort fair of the sixteenth century. The mischievous system of narrowing the usefulness of commerce for mankind by what was called Protection had not then been methodised, and the productions of different countries, where adequate channels were open, flowed by a natural process to a common centre. But great discoveries are commonly to be found in germ, either unobserved or imperfectly developed, long before their publication, which marks the stage of maturity in their idea, and makes them part of the general property of mankind. So came the printing-press, so came the steam-engine; and, in this sense, when on July 30, 1849, twenty-one months before the opening, the Prince propounded at Buckingham Palace his conception of the Great Exhibition, as it might be, to four members of the Society of Arts, he established his title to the practical authorship of no small design. In it were comprised powerful agencies tending to promote the great fourfold benefit, of progress in the industrial arts, of increased abundance or diminished stint of the means of living among men, of pacific relations between countries founded on common pursuits, and of what may be termed free trade in general culture.

6. It was a great work of peace on earth: not of that merely diplomatic peace which is honeycombed with suspicion, which bristles with the apparatus and establishments of war on a scale far beyond what was formerly required for actual belligerence, and which is potentially war, though still only on the tiptoe of expectation for an actual outbreak. It was a more stable peace, founded on

* Chap. xxxv. vol. ii. 223–5.

social and mental unison, which the Exhibition of 1851 truly, if circuitously, tended to consolidate. And if, in the quarter of a century which has since elapsed, counter influences have proved too strong for the more beneficial agencies, let us recollect that many of the wars which have since occurred have been in truth constructive wars, and have given to Europe the hope of a more firmly knit political organisation; further that, even if this had not been so, the influences of theory and practice associated with the Great Exhibition would still have earned their title to stand along with most other good influences in the world, among things valuable but not sufficient.

7. During the last decade, however, of his years, from 1852 to 1861, wars, as well as rumours of wars, became the engrossing topic of life and thought to many a mind which, if governed by its own promptings, by the true direction and demand of its nature, would have battened only on the pastures of national union and concord. The Crimean War, taken with its fore- and after-shadows, began early in 1853, and closed in 1856; it was followed by the Indian Mutiny, and this by the French war panic of 1858-60, which, more than any other cause, encouraged as it was by no small authorities, altered the disposition of the British people in a sense favourable to, and even exigent of, enlarged military and naval establishments. This, we think, was a great misfortune to the Prince, in regard both to the mental movement which required a congenial atmosphere and exercise, and to the eventual greatness which would have been its natural result. He was properly, and essentially, a man of peace The natural attitude of his mind was not that of polemical action, but of tranquil, patient, and deliberate thought.

It was as a social philosopher and hero that he was qualified to excel, rather than as a political or military athlete. It is true, indeed, that the searching fire of continual struggle educated those Royal personages, whose destiny in other days or other lands has lain beyond the precincts of the Constitutional system. But it is the very pith and essence of that system to remove from Sovereigns, and to lay upon their recognised and official servants, the heavier portions of that responsibility and strain, under which a governing will, lodged in a few human brains, or in one only, takes up into itself, and directs, while controlling, the collected force of an entire community. Doubtless even now Royalty—we speak of Constitutional Royalty—acts out in idea, with a certain reality, the contentions which it observes and superintends, and with which at particular points it may actually intermix; but, as a rule, its share in them is an indirect and mediate share. Princes are rather moons than suns in the political firmament; and the tranquil atmosphere in which they dwell, while more favourable in some of its aspects to a reflective and impartial habit of mind, is not calculated to foster the strongest tissue, or develop the hardiest forms, of character. While the Peers of England are more remote than the Parliamentary Commoners from living contact with the great seething mass of a highly vitalised community, and while the popular House must, with all its faults, remain, so long as the Constitution keeps its balance, our highest school of statesmanship, so the Throne, though vexed more than enough with labours and with worries of its own, yet, in relation to the sea of political strifes, remains sheltered within an inner and landlocked haven, and the mental habits which it tends

to generate will be less masculine though more amiable accordingly.

8. If there is force in these remarks, they will apply scarcely more to a Constitutional Sovereign than to one who attained to such a degree of moral and mental identification with the greatest of all Constitutional Sovereigns as did the Prince Consort. They have also a peculiar and individual application to a mind the rich gifts of which were not wayward and unruly, but fitted themselves at every point into the mould supplied for them by his position, and became in consequence an admirable and typical example of what that position, genially apprehended and employed, is calculated to produce.

In this view, those who most highly estimate the Prince's work may well regret that the line of mental movement represented by the Great Exhibition came soon to be deflected towards a different region of human activity. In that region mankind at large is at once excited and morally enfeebled by rivalries and conflicts hardly ever in their outset generous, and marred from the beginning of the world by their tendency to degenerate, from their first intentions, in the direction of more violent and wide-sweeping passions, more greedy selfishness, and deadlier feuds.

9. A parallel may be drawn between the Prince Consort and Mr. Pitt, in regard to one striking characteristic of their respective careers. They were both men loving peace. Each of them began, very early in life, to hold a position of high command, and of profound importance to the public welfare, in the midst of pacific ideas, plans, and expectations. Each of them achieved a reputation of the highest order in connection with this line of thought and action. Upon each of them, and singularly enough upon

each of them at the age of thirty-three, there fell what, but for the knowledge that in all mysteries of our life there lies hid but a deeper and larger Providence, we might call an ugly trick of fortune; an imperious change, not in the man, but in external circumstances, which overrule the man, and which carry him, perforce, out of a work well beloved, and more than well begun, into a place and function of opposite conditions, less congenial, and less adapted to favour the development of his character by leading him up to the highest point of its capacity. Before 1853 England had only to look with sympathy upon the sufferings and disorders of the Continent, while she watched and made provision for her own internal condition. But from that day until the sad day of the Prince's death, she was ever in actual struggle, or in anticipation of struggles deemed probable; and this great change in the nature of the cares and occupations offered to the Prince, in the normal bill of fare, so to speak, made ready for him, was to him very much what the Revolutionary War was to Mr. Pitt. With a difference indeed of degree, for the Prince was not over-weighted and absorbed as Mr. Pitt was from 1793 onwards, but with an identity of general outline, each of these changes broke up the perfect harmony that subsisted between the man and his occupation, and probably abstracted something from the ultimate claims of each to pre-eminent renown.

10. The Prince's life from day to day was, however, not a life fashioned by haphazard, but one determined by conscientious premeditation. What he said, he had usually written, what he did, he had projected. When an important subject presented itself, his tendency and practice was to throw his thoughts on it into shape, and to harmonise its practical bearings with some abstract principle.

Though a short, it was a very full and systematic life So regarding it, we may say that his marital relation to the Sovereign found a development outwards in three principal respects. First, that of assistance to the Queen in her public or political duties. Secondly, in the government of the Court and household. Thirdly, in a social activity addressed to the discovery of the wants of the community, and reaching far beyond the scope of Parliamentary interferences, as well as to making provision for those wants, by the force of lofty and intelligent example, and of moral authority.

11. The public mind had for the moment lost its balance at the particular juncture when, for the first time, the intervention of the Prince in public affairs became a subject of animadversion. It was at the beginning of 1854, during the crisis of expectation before the Crimean War, the calm that precedes the hurricane. A very short time, and a single day of explanations from Lord Aberdeen and Lord Russell, then the leaders of the two Houses of Parliament, sufficed to set right a matter which we now wonder that any should have had either the will or the power to set wrong. It was a matter of course that the Queen's husband should be more or less her political adviser. It would have been nothing less than a violence done to nature if, with his great powers and congenial will, any limits had been placed upon the relations of confidence between the two, with respect to any public affairs whatsoever. Had he been an inferior person, his interference would doubtless have been limited by his want of capacity. But he being, as he was, qualified to examine, comprehend, and give counsel, the two minds were thrown into common stock, and worked as one.

12. We must go one step further. It does not seem

easy to limit the Sovereign's right of taking friendly counsel, by any absolute rule, to the case of a husband. If it is the Queen's duty to form a judgment upon important proposals submitted to her by her Ministers, she has an indisputable right to the use of all instruments which will enable her to discharge that duty with effect; subject always, and subject only, to the one vital condition that they do not disturb the relation, on which the whole machinery of the Constitution hinges, between those Ministers and the Queen. She cannot, therefore, as a rule, legitimately consult in private on political matters with the party in opposition to the Government of the day; but she will have copious public means, in common with the rest of the nation, for knowing their general views through Parliament and the Press! She cannot consult at all, except in the strictest secrecy: for the doubts, the misgivings, the inquiries, which accompany all impartial deliberation in the mind of a Sovereign as well as of a subject, and which would transpire in the course of promiscuous conversation, are not matters fit for exhibition to the world. The dignity of the Crown requires that it should never come into contact with the public, or with the Cabinet, in mental dishabille; and that the words of its wearer should be ripe, well considered, few. For like reasons, it is plain that the Sovereign cannot legitimately be in confidential communication with many minds. Nor, again, with the representatives of classes or professions as such, for their views are commonly narrow and self-centred, not freely swayed, as they ought to be, by the paramount interests of the whole body politic.

13. We have before us, in these pages, a truly normal example of a personal councillor of the Queen, for public affairs, in her Husband; and another, hardly less normal, in

Stockmar. Both of them observed all along the essential condition, without which their action would have been not only most perilous, but most mischievous. That is to say, they never affected or set up any separate province or authority of their own; never aimed at standing as an opaque medium between the Sovereign and her Constitutional advisers. In their legitimate place, they took up their position behind the Queen; but not, so to speak, behind the Throne. They assisted her in arriving at her conclusions; but those conclusions, once adopted, were hers and hers alone. She, and she only, could be recognised by a Minister as speaking for the Monarch's office. The Prince, lofty as was his position, and excellent as was his capacity, vanished as it were from view, and did not, and could not, carry, as towards them, a single ounce of substantive authority. If he conferred with Lord Palmerston on matters of delicacy, belonging to the relation between the Sovereign and the Secretary of State, it could only be as the Queen's messenger, and no word spoken by him could be a final word. Let us revert to an illustration already used.* As the adjective gives colour to the substantive, so he might influence the mind of the Queen. But only through that mind, only by informing that supreme free-agency, could his influence legitimately act; and this doctrine, we apprehend, is not only a doctrine wholesome in itself, but also indisputable, nay, what is more, vital to the true balance of the English Monarchy. On the other hand, as the Queen deals with the Cabinet, just so the Cabinet deals with the Queen. The Sovereign is to know no more of any differing views of different Ministers than they are to know of any col-

* *Sup.* p. 33.

lateral representatives of the Monarchical office; they are an unity before the Sovereign, and the Sovereign is an unity before them. All this, it will be observed, is not a description of matters of fact, but a setting forth of what the principles of our Monarchy presuppose; it is a study from the closet, not the forum or the court; and it would have been more convenient to use the masculine gender in speaking of an abstract occupant of the Throne, but for the fact that we have become so thoroughly disused to it under the experience of forty happy years.

14. Steady and sound, however, as would appear to have been the application of these principles to practice, on the part of Baron Stockmar, and, in his higher and more difficult position, of the Prince, we take leave to question the theoretic representation* set forward by the one and accepted by the other; as well as countersigned by the biographer, at a period of calm, very different from the political weather which prevailed at the moment of its production. This representation is conveyed in a long letter, dated January 5, 1854, and consisting of two parts. In the second and much the shorter of the two, it is held that the Prince "acts as the Queen's private secretary, and that all else is simply calumnious"; and the right of Her Majesty to the assistance implied under this modest name is justly vindicated (pp. 554–7). But the first portion of the letter contains a Constitutional dissertation, which was in no manner required for the support of these rational propositions, and which is based, as we think, mainly upon misconception and confusion, such as we should not have expected from a man of the Baron's long British experience and acute perceptions.

* Vol. ii. pp. 545–7.

His main propositions appear to be these: that again and again, since the Reform Act, Ministers have failed to sustain the prerogatives of the Crown; that the old Tories, who supported these prerogatives, were extinct, and that the existing Tories were (p. 546) "degenerate bastards"; that the Whigs and "politicians of the Aberdeen School" were conscious or unconscious republicans; that the most jealous Liberalism could not object to "a right on the part of the King to be the permanent President of his Ministerial Council" (p. 547); that Premiers were apt to be swayed by party interests; that no penalty for Ministerial obliquities now remained but that of resignation: that this was insufficient to secure good conduct from the bad or the incapable; that the Sovereign should take part at the deliberations of his Council; that the centre of gravity had been shifted by the Act of 1832 from the House of Lords to the House of Commons; that a well-merited popularity of the Sovereign was to support the House of Lords against the dangers of democracy, and his direct action in the Government to be a *vis medicatrix naturæ* (p. 551) for maintaining prerogative, and for supplying all defects by a judgment raised above party passions. Yet the right of the Crown is to be merely moral (p. 549); and in the face of it, Ministers would act, as to their [legislative?] measures, with entire freedom and independence; but, as to policy and administration, the Sovereign is primarily charged with a control over them, which he should exercise through the Premier (p. 549).

15. Thus the Baron. A congeries of propositions stranger in general result never, in our judgment, was amassed in order to explain to the unlearned the more mysterious lessons embraced in the study of the British Monarchy.

Taken singly, some of them are truisms; some are qualifications, which usefully restrain or neutralise the companion statements. Some also are misstatements of history; others of fact. For example. The Parliamentary Constitution had its centre of gravity in the House of Commons, not in the House of Lords, before, as well as after, the Reform Act. The House of Lords, in fact, has resisted the will of the House of Commons since the Reform Act, more than it did before the passing of that great statute. The gravest change, then, effected in regard to the House of Lords, was this: that, under the old system, the Peers had in their own hands the virtual appointment of a large section of the House of Commons; whereas now, although their influence in elections is still great, it is exercised through and by what is supposed to be, and in general is, a popular and voluntary vote. The Reform controversy was admirably argued on both sides; not perhaps worse on the side of the opponents of Reform; some of whom, following up a subtle disquisition of philosophical politics, set out in a previous number of the *Edinburgh Review*, pointed out unanswerably that singular economy, by which the old close boroughs had cushioned off, as it were, the conflicts between the two Houses; and then predicted with truth, though likewise with exaggeration, that when once the House of Lords ceased to assert and express itself by this peculiar method within the House of Commons, it would be driven upon the alternative of more frequently pronouncing an adverse judgment.

16. Again, Baron Stockmar teaches that the prerogatives of the Crown had been abandoned by successive Ministries, and had no longer any party ready to defend them. It would be much nearer the truth to say that there was no

longer any party disposed to assail them. But what means the Baron by "the prerogatives of the Crown"? Are they prerogatives as against the Ministers? or prerogatives as against the Parliament, or the popular branch of it? As against the Ministers, the Sovereign's prerogatives before the Reform Act were: firstly, that of appointing and dismissing them; secondly, that of exercising an influence over their deliberations, which was, as the Baron says, in one of his qualifying passages, in the nature of a moral right or influence. The first of these is virtually a right of appeal from the Cabinet to the Parliament, or the nation, or both: and no such conspicuous instance of its exercise can be cited from our pre-Reform history as was supplied by William IV. after the Reform Act, in the month of November 1834, with no sort of reason and (it is true) without success, but also without any strain to the Constitution, or any penalty other than the disagreeable sensation of being defeated, and of having greatly strengthened and reinvigorated by recoil the fortunes of the party* on whom it had been meant to inflict an overthrow. As regards the prerogative or power, which gives the Monarch an undoubted *locus standi* in all the deliberations of a Government, it remains as it was; and it is important or otherwise, exactly in proportion to the ability, the character, the experience, and, above all, the attention, which the Sovereign of the day brings to bear upon it.

17. If there be differences, they are not at all the differences which Baron Stockmar indicates. It is, indeed, certain that the Monarch has to deal with the popular power in a proximate instead of a remote position: but so

* *Sup.* p. 38, *inf.* p. 235.

have the Ministers. It is likewise true, that there was once a party of King's friends (as well as a large number of the nominees of Peers) within the House of Commons, by means of whom he could operate to a certain extent, in an unavowed manner, upon or against his Ministers. But of this party we lose all trace after the reign of George III.; so that it supplies no standing ground for the Baron. It is, perhaps, also true that the subordination in the last resort of the Royal to the national will, when expressed through the Constitutional organs, which was fact before the Reform Bill, has been more patent and admitted fact since that measure became law. The dying throes of independent Kingship gave for a moment a real pang to the self-centred mind of George IV., and even imparted a certain interest to his personality, when after many struggles he consented or gave way to the Bill for Roman Catholic Emancipation in 1829.

18. Baron Stockmar, however, appears to confuse the prerogatives of the Crown, which are really represented by Ministerial action in the face of the Legislature, with the personal rights of the Sovereign in the face of and as towards his or her Ministers. And here the question must be cleared by another distinction, of which, in this rather confused and very disappointed letter, he takes no notice: the distinction between the statutory powers of the Crown and those immemorial and inherent powers, which have no written warrant, which form the real and genuine prerogative, and which also form a great oral tradition of the Constitution: resembling in their unwritten character what is called the privilege of Parliament, but differing from it in that they are perfectly well defined. In the mouth of Baron Stockmar, the plural word Prerogatives appears to include both classes of

these powers, which only ignorance can confuse, though sometimes, even in high official places, ignorance does effectually confuse them. Accepting the phrase for the moment, we ask which of these statutory prerogatives have, since the Reform Act, been forfeited or impaired through the timidity of the Governments down to 1854, or, we might perhaps add, of succeeding Governments? The question is most important, for, by dint of the prerogative proper, and of these statutory powers, the Ministers, sustained as they are by the Sovereign behind them, form a great part, not only of the executive or deputed, but of the ultimate and supreme governing force in this country.

19. In order to test the doctrine of Baron Stockmar, let us enumerate some examples of the vigour of the powers of the Crown. We have already spoken of the great prerogative of dismissal of Ministers as it was illustrated in 1834. Surely the prerogative of appointment of Bishops sufficiently proved its animation, against the remonstrance of the Primates and a body of their Suffragans, in the case of Dr. Hampden. The prerogative of peace and war did the same in 1857, when Lord Palmerston carried on, at the charge of the country, a war in China, which the representatives of the people, the stewards of the public purse, had condemned. It was only upon the general election to which he had recourse that he received the sanction of the country for what he had done. And the prerogative of dissolution must have been in a healthy state in 1852 to enable a Government, supported only by a minority, to perform the work of the session, and to carry the Supplies, before asking the judgment of the constituencies on its title to exist.

20. There is, indeed, but one prerogative of the Crown, so far as we are able to read the Constitutional history of the country, or rather but one of any great significance, which has suffered of late years. It is the initiative in proposing grants of public money. This prerogative, if such it is to be called, has been seriously and increasingly infringed, to the great detriment of the nation. And this by a double process. The House of Commons was very rarely disposed, before the Reform Act, to press upon the Administration of the day new plans or proposals involving public outlay. After the Reform Act, there was manifested a vicious tendency to multiply these instances, which, however, produced no very serious consequences for the first twenty or twenty-five years, but which has become a great public mischief, since the increasing wealth of the most active and influential classes of the country has brought about a greater and wider indifference to economy in the public expenditure. Local claims, and the interests of classes and individuals, are now relentlessly and constantly pressed from private and irresponsible quarters; and though the House of Commons still maintains the rule that money shall not be voted except on the proposal of the Crown, yet it permits itself to be pledged by Addresses, Resolutions, and even the language of Bills and Acts, to outlay in many forms, and these pledges it becomes morally compulsory on Governments in their turn to redeem.

21. But, in addition to the activity of private, professional, and local greed, and the possible cowardice of Ministers in resistance, it must be noted that the House of Lords has done very great mischief in this respect, by voting into Bills the establishment of officers and appointment of salaries, and sending these Bills to the Commons

with all such portions printed in italics, a conventional expedient adopted in order to show that they are not presented as parts of the Bill, but only as indications of the view or wish of the House of Lords; in matters, however, in which they have as a body no more right or title to any view or wish at all, than the House of Commons has or had to send in italics, or by any subterfuge, to the Lords a direction as to the judgments to be given in appeals. Here, then, we have a real case in which a power of the Crown has been greatly and mischievously weakened. But this is a power which probably forms no part of prerogative properly so called. We apprehend that it rests upon no statute, but only on a wise and self-denying rule of the House of Commons itself. The Crown, as such, has no immediate interest in it whatever; and there is not the smallest reason to suppose that Baron Stockmar knew to what solid truth in this one respect he was giving utterance, or that he in any way cared about the matter.

22. There is, indeed, one genuine Crown right which has been somewhat disparaged of late years; and that is its title to the Crown Lands. By degrees, it became the custom for the Sovereign, on accession, to surrender the life-interest in these properties to the State, in return for a life-income called the Civil List. But this transaction in no way affected the legal right of the next heir to resume the lands on the expiry of the arrangement. It is undeniable that members of Oppositions, and the blamable connivances of party, have of late years, in various instances, obtained by pressure from the Governments of the day arrangements which touch the reversionary interest. The question is too complex and many-sided for exposition here: but it may be said with truth, first,

that the State has dealt liberally as a tenant under a life-lease with the estates given to its control; and, secondly, that the subject is in a Constitutional view a small one. Neither shall we here investigate the curious doctrine—in one sense novel, and in another obsolete—of those who contend that the Sovereign has a peculiar relation to the Army, involving some undefined power apart or different from its general relation to the executive portion of the business of government. We shall only observe that, in this country, the standing Army is itself extra-Constitutional, and that its entire dependence upon Parliament has been secured, not as in the case of the Civil Services by a single provision, that of requiring annual votes for its support; but also by the further precaution of granting only by annual Mutiny Acts those powers for enforcing discipline which are necessary for its management. Not even a colourable plea can be set up for an exceptional power or prerogative in respect to the Army.

23. As to the occasion of Baron Stockmar's letter to the Prince, the truth seems to have been this: A most unreasonable and superficial clamour had been raised against the intervention of the Prince as a counsellor, an adviser, in the performance of the Queen's public duties: a clamour due to the peculiar susceptibilities of his time, the aberration of a portion of the press, and the very undue disposition of what is questionably called "good society" to canvass in an ill-natured manner the character and position of one who did not stoop to flatter its many vulgar fancies, and whose strictly ordered life was a continual though silent rebuke to the luxurious licence that large portions of it love and habitually indulge in. Instead of dealing with this practical matter in a practical manner, Baron Stockmar was unhappily tempted to stray

into the flowery fields of theory. *S'avid sui floridi sentier.** His Constitutional knowledge, apart from his working common-sense, which he did not think good enough for so high an occasion, was, after all, only an English top-dressing on a German soil: and hence he has given a perfectly honest but a most misleading exposition of a great subject, highly needful to be rightly apprehended everywhere, and of course most of all in Courts.

24. One of his propositions is that the King, if a clever man—for so (p. 549) it seems to be limited, and we do not envy those who would have to pronounce the decision "Ay" or "No" upon the point, nor indeed do we know who they are—shall "make use of these qualities at the deliberations of his Council." Now this, to speak with a rustic plainness, is simply preposterous. We take first the ground, which would be called the lowest. If the Sovereign is to attend the Cabinet, he must, like other Cabinet Ministers, adapt his life to its arrangements, spend most of the year in London, and when in the country be always ready to return to it at a moment's notice. Perhaps it may be thought that, as would be only seemly, Cabinets could, as a rule, be postponed to suit the convenience of so august a personage. It would be almost as easy to postpone the rising of the sun. But let us suppose him there, not on his throne, but in his arm-chair. He must surely preside; and in that case what becomes of the First Minister? It is a curious, but little observed, fact of our history, that the office of First Minister only seems to have obtained regular recognition as the idea of personal government by the action of the King faded and became invisible. So late as in the final

* Manzoni, 'Cinque Maggio.'

attacks upon Sir Robert Walpole, it was one of the charges against him that he had assumed the functions of First Minister. The presence of the King at the Cabinet either means personal government—that is to say, the reservation to him of all final decisions which he may think fit to appropriate—or else the forfeiture of dignity by his entering upon equal terms into the arena of general, searching, and sometimes warm discussion; nay, and even of voting, too, and of being outvoted, for in Cabinets, and even in the Cabinets reputed best, important questions have sometimes been found to admit of no other form of decision.

25. Now such is the mass, detail, and technical difficulty of public affairs in this great Empire, that it would be an absolute cruelty to the Sovereign to put him through these agonies; for it is no trifling work and pain to hammer into form the measures and decisions which are, when promulgated, to endure the myriad-minded, myriad-pointed criticism of the Parliament, the press, and the country. At present, the Sovereign is brought into contact only with the net results of previous inquiry and deliberation, conducted by other and, as the Constitution presumes, by select men. The Baron's proposal is to immerse him in the crude mass of preliminary pleas and statements, to bring him face to face with every half-formed view, to compel him to deal with each plus and minus known and unknown, quantity in and by itself, instead of submitting to him only the ascertained sum of the equations. The few remarks now offered are far indeed from exhibiting exhaustively the huge demerits of this unwise proposal; but they may serve to prove or indicate that either, while intolerably cumulating labour, it must sorely impair dignity and authority; or, if it aims at

preserving these, the end can only be gained by making the King the umpire and final arbiter of deliberations, to which he listens only for the assistance of his own judgment. That is, they not simply alter, but overturn, the Constitution, by making a personal will supreme over the ascertained representative will of the nation.

26. If, however, the office of the First Minister would have suffered by the last-named proposal, it seems that compensation was to be given him at the expense of his colleagues. We shall not record any dissent from the general view of the remarkable controversy between the Crown, or Court, and Lord Palmerston; which is to the effect that, in the main, the Sovereign was right in demanding time and opportunity, of course with a due reserve for the exigencies of urgent business, for a real, and not merely a perfunctory, consideration of draft despatches. But with this there seems to have been combined a demand that the drafts of the Foreign Minister should be submitted to the Sovereign only through the head of the Government. It is laid down (p. 300) that the First Minister, as well as the Foreign Secretary, is bound to advise the Crown on questions of Foreign policy; and, we are told, it was accordingly demanded (p. 302)—

"That the despatches submitted for her approval must therefore pass through the hands of Lord John Russell, who, if he should think they required material change, should accompany them with a statement of his reasons."

27. It is unquestionable that the Prime Minister, who is entitled to interfere with, and in a well-organised Cabinet is constantly invoked by, every Department, has a special concern in Foreign affairs. He will, therefore, have something to say upon the drafts prepared by his colleague.

But this, according to the sound law of established practice, he will say to his colleague; and the draft, as it goes to the Sovereign, will express their united view. Instead of this, the proposal seems to have been that the drafts prepared by the Foreign Minister should be discussed and settled between the Prime Minister and the Sovereign. Now almost any system may be made workable by considerate and tender handling; but the method now before us, issuing as a hard abstraction, would justly be said to degrade an office of a dignity and weight second to none after that of the Head of the Government. The transmission through the First Minister seems indeed to have been agreed to, wrongly as we think, by Lord Palmerston (p. 309); and Stockmar in his Memorandum apparently extends this system to all the Ministers, for he says that the control of the Sovereign would be "exercised most safely for the rest of them through the Premier." Thus the Premier would stand between them and the Sovereign. The Baron failed to perceive that this involves a fundamental change in their position: their relations to the Crown become mediate instead of immediate; they are no longer the confidential servants of Her Majesty; he is the sole confidential servant, they are the head clerks: he is in the closet, they stand in the hall without.

28. To some readers these may appear to be mere subtleties. They certainly escaped eyes of great acuteness when those of the Prince Consort, and of Baron Stockmar, passed over them. But every trade has its secrets. The baker and the brewer, the carpenter and the mason, all the fraternity of handicraft and production, have, where they understand their business, certain nice *minutiæ* of action, neither intelligible to nor seen by the observer from without, but upon which niceties the whole efficiency of their work,

and the just balances of its parts, depend. There is nowhere a more subtle machinery than that of the British Cabinet. It has no laws. It has no records. Of the few who pass within the magic circle, and belong to it, many never examine the mechanism which they help to work. Only the most vague conceptions respecting its structure and operations are afloat in the public mind. These things may be pretty safely asserted: that it is not a thing made to order, but a growth; and that no subject of equal importance has been so little studied. We need not wonder if even to the most intelligent foreigner, who gets it up as a lesson from a school-book, it is an unsolved riddle. We may be thankful that the mistaken reasonings of Baron Stockmar never baffled his good sense in practical advice, and that his balloon, even after careering wildly in the fields of air, always managed, when about alighting on the earth, to find its way home.

29. We will now turn to another chapter, where Mr. Martin deals with the Papal Aggression, and with the thoughts which the controversy at that time stirred in the mind of the Prince. He went to work, as his manner was, to "analyse" (p. 341) the crisis, in its Anglican rather than in its Romeward aspect, with philosophical assiduity; and he laid down the principles which he conceived to indicate the true path towards a remedy.

The evil he conceived to be the introduction of Romish doctrines and practices by the Clergy against the will of their congregations, under the assumption of a sole authority. And the cure he found in three propositions, thus expressed (p. 343):—

"That the Laity have an equal share of authority in the Church with the Clergy.

"That no alteration in the form of Divine Service shall therefore be made without the formal consent of the Laity.

"For any interpretation given of Articles of Faith without their concurrence."

From these, he thought, would spring a "whole living Church constitution," in government and doctrine.

30. Of these propositions we put aside the first, not only because it is expressed without historical or theological precision, but also and mainly because it is an abstraction. Nor need we dwell upon the third, because, after another quarter of a century's experience, it has not been thought necessary, either by Laity or Clergy, to call for any new interpretation of Articles of Faith. But the second touches a matter which has invited legislative handling—namely, "the form of Divine Service." And the readers of Mr. Martin will at once be struck with the glaring fact, that the basis for legislation which was suggested by the Prince is totally different from that which was accepted by Parliament on the recommendation of the Archbishops and the Earl of Beaconsfield. Nor is the difference of a speculative character; the lines on which the two work out their results are lines which cut across one another. In making good this proposition, we shall assume, of course—but it is a very large and generous assumption—that the Act will be both impartially and learnedly worked by the tribunals. So regarding it, we observe that the very rule which the Prince sets up, the Archbishops and the Prime Minister have induced Parliament to trample under foot. The rule of the Prince is that existing practice is so far to be presumed right practice that it shall not be altered without consent of Laity and Clergy. The basis of the Act is that existing practice, however established by length of time, and however acceptable both

to Laity and Clergy, may at any time be challenged by three parishioners, who may never have even seen the inside of the church as worshippers, and, unless the will of the Bishop intercept the process, is to be overset if it be inconsistent with the judicial, that is the literal, meaning of the words of a statute passed in 1661. Further, it is now the presumable duty, imposed by law upon the Clergy, of themselves to alter their practice, even against their own inclinations and those of the congregation, where it is not in conformity with the exact prescriptions of that statute in any one of the myriad details which it comprises.

31. It is true that, where a trial is demanded, the Bishop may stop it. We do not doubt that this power, without which the Act would have been even far worse than it is, will be rationally and prudently exercised by nearly all the Bishops. But the difficulty of so using it will, to the most honest and enlightened mind, be very great: in one or two instances, which it would be invidious to name, we can hardly hope that it will be considerately employed; and if but one Bishop out of twenty-eight or thirty be suitable to their purpose, the wire-pullers at the centre will put up in that diocese their three puppet-parishioners, and seek so to rule the whole country. The whole spirit and tendency of the Act go to narrow discretion; to curtail freedom enjoyed for generations with satisfaction to all; and to tighten practice according to a rule adopted more than two centuries ago, and to such interpretations of that rule as may be pronounced by judges, nearly the whole of whom are not only ignorant of ecclesiastical history and law, but apparently as unaware as babes that such ignorance is either a disqualification, or even a disadvantage, for the exercise of their office. But this tendency and spirit of

the Act is and has been felt to be so intolerable, that it has been qualified by the interpolation of an arbitrary power, which may extinguish the Act in Diocese A, give it absolute and unrestricted sway in Diocese B, and a mode of operation adjusted to as many points between these extremes in Dioceses from C to Z.

32. Now the Prince's plan sets out upon another line of movement. Not denying the authority of the law, nor impeding its ultimate enforcement, it introduced collaterally into our system a new sanction—namely, a sanction for things established by usage. They were not to be altered without consent of Laity and Clergy. This was his simple project of change. Where that consent was obtained, and the desire for a change established, still they could only be altered in the direction of conformity with the law, which remained applicable in all its rigour, and without any spurious triad of parishioners or any intervention of an arbitrary *veto*, to unestablished novelties. We have surely here a very notable competition between the plans of the Archbishops and of the Prince.

"Look here upon this picture—and on this."

The Prince was ever regarded with some jealousy and apprehension by Churchmen: yet some of them may be tempted to wish not only that his most valuable life had been largely prolonged, but that he had been Primate of all England in 1874. We should not then have been trembling at this time in fearful anxiety to learn whether a great and historic Church, rich in work and blessing, rich in traditions, and richer still in promise, is or is not to be the victim of the follies committed in 1874.*

* It is needful to correct an error into which Mr. Martin has fallen not unnaturally, in a matter lying beside the main scope of his task

33. It was to be expected that one whose life was so steadily held under the control of conscience should deeply feel the responsibilities attending the education of the Royal children. In no station of life is there such a command, or such a free application, of all the appliances of instruction. The obstacles which it places in the way of profound and solid learning are indeed insurmountable. This disability is perhaps compensated by the tendency of the station itself to confer a large amount of general information, and of social training. Our young Princes and Princesses have grown up under a sense of social responsibility far heavier than that which is felt by, or impressed upon, children born and reared at the degree of elevation next to theirs. In a religious point of view, however, their dangers are immense: and they are greatly aggravated by the fact that, after the earliest periods of life are passed, and anything like manhood is attained, they do not enjoy the benefit of that invaluable check upon thought and conduct which is afforded by the free communication and mutual correction of equals. They have

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He says in p. 338 that after the Papal Brief "the country was put upon the alert, and the progress of proselytism stayed." Chronologically, this is not so. It was shortly after the Papal Brief that the great rush of secessions took place. Then it was that Cardinal Manning carried into the Roman Church those peculiar and very remarkable powers of government to which she at least has not refused a sphere. Then departed from us Mr. James Hope Scott, Q.C.; a man who may, with little exaggeration, be called the flower of his generation. With and after them went a host of others. It was eminently the time of secessions. It may be difficult to say whether the Papal Brief seriously acted one way or the other. For it was very closely followed by the Judgment in the Gorham case, and this may in all likelihood have been the principal cause of a blast which swept away, to their own great detriment as well as ours, a large portion of our most learned, select, and devoted clergy.

no equals: the cases in which a friend can be strong enough and bold enough to tell them the whole truth about themselves are of necessity exceptional. It is much if, as in England, the air of Courts is not tainted with actual falsehood. The free circulation of truth it hardly can permit: and the central personages in them are hereby deprived in a great degree of one of the readiest and most effective helps for their salvation, while, at the same time, they are set up as a mark to attract all the wiles of the designing and the vile.

34. It is well known, to the infinite honour of Her Majesty and of the Prince, how, especially in the conspicuous instances of the Dowager Lady Lyttelton and of the excellent Dean of Windsor, the best provision which love and wisdom could suggest was made for the religious training of the Royal offspring. In this department, as well as in others, the Prince looked for a principle, and a defined scope. As early as March 1842 (p. 175) the inevitable Baron had supplied a Memorandum on the subject. He reverted to it in July 1846 (p. 183); and laid it down that it could not be too soon determined in what principles the Prince of Wales should be brought up. He deprecated the frame of mind which leads to indiscriminate conservatism, desired freedom of thought, and a reflective appreciation of practical morality as indispensable to the relation between Sovereign and people. And then he proceeded to the question of religion. The law required that "the belief of the Church of England shall be the faith of the members of the Royal Family" (p. 185): and this law must be obeyed. But should not the young Prince's mind in due time be opened to changes in progress, and to the probable effect of discoveries in science? Society, says the Baron, is already divided into two classes. The first is composed

of those who hope for improvement from increased knowledge of nature, and attention to the laws of our being; which will work out the results intended by the Creator. Of the hierophants of this class the Baron, while he favours them, has not hesitated to write thus: "a constant war is carried on openly, but more generally from masked batteries, by this class of persons, on the prevailing religious opinions" (p. 186). "The class contains the seeds of important modifications in the opinions and religious institutions of the British Empire."

35. Then we have the second class, whom the Baron succinctly describes as "the advocates of supernatural religion." This is frank enough: and no attempt is made to disguise the fact that the issue raised was between Christianity and Theism. The account given of this class is given *ab extra*, and not as in the other case from within the precinct. It is, accordingly, as might have been expected, fundamentally inaccurate and misleading. "The orthodox believers regard the supernatural portions of Christianity as the basis which sustains its morality, and as the sole foundations of government, law, and subordination." Of misrepresentation Baron Stockmar was incapable; but we have here a strange amount of ignorance. He might as well have said that supernaturalists were men who did not eat or drink, and who held that corporal life was only to be sustained by Divine grace, which was the sole foundation of running and jumping. A man who lives in the second story of a house rests only, it seems, upon the air, and not upon the first story and the basement. But, in truth, the Christian morality enjoys all the supports which belong to the morality of Stockmar, while it is lifted by the Incarnation to a higher level, with a larger view, and a place nearer to God. We could not

expect him to have wasted his time in reading the works of theologians, which, however, he thought himself qualified to describe. Yet he ought surely to have known that St. Paul expressly deduces the binding character of religion (Rom. i. 19, 20) from the book of Nature, and also regards offences against Nature as a distinct and deeper category of sin (*ibid.* 26, 27). Nor would it have been unworthy of him to bear in mind that Dante has placed the violent against Nature in a deeper condemnation even than those who are violent against God ('Inferno,' Canto XIV. and XV.). The Baron must have been a good deal puzzled to reconcile his own unequivocal condemnation of supernatural religion with his frank recognition of a legal necessity for training in the Anglican system of belief. Upon the whole we must say, even with the gratitude every Englishman should feel towards this faithful friend and adviser of his Sovereign, the Memorandum, as it is presented by Mr. Martin, has too much the appearance of one of the "masked batteries" which it describes. But parental wisdom was not to be seduced even by this great authority, and the arrangements for the education of the Prince of Wales were made, we believe, in the old Christian fashion.

36. It is not, however, as a model either of theological or of political opinion that any human being can profitably be proposed for exact imitation, or that we think the Prince will be longest and best remembered among us. In the speculative man there remained much more of the German than in the practical. His contemplation and study of the living and working England were alike assiduous and fruitful; and this man, who never sat upon our Throne, and who ceased at the early age of forty-two to stand beside it, did more than any of our

Sovereigns, except very, very few, to brighten its lustre and to strengthen its foundations. He did this, by the exhibition in the highest place, jointly with the Queen, of a noble and lofty life, which refused to take self for the centre of its action, and sought its pleasure in the unceasing performance of duty. There has been, beyond all doubt, one perceptible and painful change since his death: a depression of the standard of conduct within the very highest circle of society. In proof of this melancholy proposition, we will specify that branch of morality which may fairly be taken as a testing-branch —namely, conjugal morality. Among the causes of an incipient change so disastrous to our future prospects, we should be inclined to reckon the death of the Prince Consort, and the disappearance from public view of that majestic and imposing, as well as attractive and instructive, picture of a Court which, while he lived, was always before the eyes of the aristocracy and the nation.

37. Neither this book, nor any book written from a peculiar point of view, can ever supply a standard history of the period it embraces. It may, nevertheless, supply— and we think it has thus far supplied—a valuable contribution to, and an indispensable part of, such a history. This alone more than justifies the publication. But it has a yet higher title in its faithful care and solid merit as a biography. From the midst of the hottest glow of worldly splendour it has drawn forth to public contemplation a genuine piece of solid, sterling, and unworldly excellence; a pure and lofty life, from which every man, and most of all every Christian, may learn many an ennobling lesson; and on which he may do well to meditate, when he communes with his own heart, in his chamber, and is still.

IV.

LIFE OF THE PRINCE CONSORT.

Vol. III. London, 1877.*

1. The labours of Mr. Martin on the life of the Prince Consort have been marked by a conscientious diligence not less noteworthy than his talent and his equitable temper. With these qualifications, and with the free access to the innermost centres of confidential information, which has been so graciously accorded to him by the Sovereign, he has in his two former Volumes presented to us a personal portraiture of the Prince Consort so complete that it scarcely allows the addition of a touch. The biographer, as he proceeds along the course of the revolving years, can indeed lengthen the ample catalogue of actions wise and good; and can show how time, as it gives new force, depth, and dignity to the human countenance, even into a prolonged old age, so also imparts a riper mellowness, and a more compact solidity, to mental faculty and work.

2. Monumental commemoration, which reminds man of his weakness even more than of his strength, and which has been carried farther perhaps in the case of the Prince Consort than of any other distinguished personage, has something in it that jars, when it goes beyond the modesty of custom. Yet every statue and memorial of the Prince

* Published in the *Church of England Quarterly Review* for January 1878.

may in some sense be considered as a sermon made visible. He is one of the few, the very few, characters on the active stage of modern life, in whom the idea of duty seems to be actually impersonated, and to walk abroad in the costumes of State. It is good for us to be taken back, again and again, to see the spectacle, and so to learn its lessons. After making every allowance for a work composed almost within the precinct of a Court, and without pretending to determine the precise place which history will finally accord to him upon the roll of greatness, we are safe in saying that upon the extended surface of society we may travel far and wide, before the eye is blessed with so strong and happy a combination of mental and of moral force. Nor can it be questioned that such combination is more precious to mankind in exact proportion as its seat is found, and its activity developed, near to the summit of the social fabric. Born with all these faculties to a high station, and lifted up by marriage to one of unusual splendour, it was his fate, being torn away in the very flower of his manhood and the vigour of all his gifts, to add to the lustre of his career that peculiar touch of pathos given by the master artist of heroic character to his Achilles; to whom the consummation of his glory was only permitted on condition of the shortening of his life.* In the attentive reader of this Volume will probably deepen the impression he may have received from those which preceded it, that few indeed have been the lives, in this curiously chequered age of ours, which upon the whole come nearer to the standard which in general we contemplate rather than attain.

3. This repeated presentation to the public eye of such

* Iliad, B. IX. 410–6.

a picture, with all its elevating and all its calming influences, is indeed so wholesome that we feel anything rather than displeased with Mr. Martin when he informs us, in his Preface, that the work has in spite of him outgrown the limits which he had appointed for it, and that it must extend through a fourth of these large and portly Volumes. The consequence, however, is, that it assumes, as we proceed, the character less of a biography, and more of a history. It may also be stated with some confidence that for a final history of the times, and of the great events it touches, it is both too near and too brief. Mr. Martin has evidently been guided in his course by the consideration that the history of the period he has here to traverse was really a part of the Prince's life; so operative was the force that he had exerted in the making of it. Of this the Prince himself, for once, allows himself to speak in significant terms:—

"The things of all sorts that are laid on our shoulders, *i.e.* on *mine*, are not to be told. People feel that a certain power exists, which has not thrust itself ostentatiously forward, and therefore they fancy it must be doing harm, even although the results of what it does must all be admitted to be good."—P. 457.

4. There are, indeed, those who surmise that this extension of Mr. Martin's plan has been effected in order to carry back the public mind in large detail to the associations of the Crimean War, and thus to revive the sentiments of hostility to Russia which at that epoch naturally and warrantably prevailed. But, even apart from the remembrance of the high auspices under which he writes, we know of nothing to justify the imputation to him of a mischievous and paltry trick. The imputation itself is probably due to the exultation with which the portion of

our newspaper press that is hostile to the subject races in Turkey has gloated on his reference to the cruelty with which, in some instances, our wounded were treated by the Russian soldiers as they lay on the battle-field. This is an excess to be severely reprobated. Prince Menschikoff alleged, in justification, that English prisoners had made use of concealed revolvers (p. 159) to shoot down their captors; but this must have been rare, for he finds it necessary to put in other excuses also, which are frivolous. Attempts have, however, been made to treat this proceeding as parallel to the wicked, and indeed fiendish, proceedings of the Turks in mutilation and cruel torture on the fields of recent battle. To compare the two is truly *minima componere magnis*. To give no quarter, and to put an end to the life of the wounded, is one thing; to mutilate, to torture, and to burn them is another; and these are the practices, too well attested, of the last few months.* Mr. Martin for a moment happens to deviate from his usual impartiality, when he seems (p. 160) to match the simple privation of life with this more than bestial delight in torture. We do not know if it has ever been stated to him, as it has been to us, on the authority of Lord Gough, that there were too many acts of this description committed by the British soldiers, in the war of the Punjaub, on their wounded and disabled enemies.

5. There is a supposition, much more rational as well as much more charitable, which may tend to account for Mr. Martin's having altered and enlarged his plan at this particular juncture. For this alteration has enabled not only to show the part which the Prince took in all the anxieties

* See, *e.g.*, the article of Mr. Forbes, in *The Nineteenth Century* for November, p. 571.

of the Crimean War, but to give us the Prince's evidence in his own detailed and repeated language as to the policy in furtherance of which it was undertaken. So much has been recently stated, or mis-stated, in regard to the aim and motive of that war, that nothing can be more seasonable than the opportunity he offers us of learning something on the subject from high and dispassionate authority. For the authority is, in truth, very high. We are to regard the Prince Consort as having been while he lived the mind's eye, so to speak, of a Sovereign who entered with energy into all great transactions. There was such a standing partnership, and common movement of the two, combined with such a harmony of character and feeling, that we may regard the will of either one as speaking for both; and, jointly, they had unrivalled means from day to day for estimating what the French call the "situation." From near presence, and close and constant intercourse, reaching far beyond established forms, they knew not only the resolutions of the Aberdeen Cabinet, but the interior mind of all those members of it who had special titles to exercise an influence on its foreign policy. Of these the most important were Lord Aberdeen as Prime Minister, and Lord Clarendon as Foreign Secretary. Next to them came Lord Palmerston, on account of his great knowledge and experience in foreign affairs; and with him Lord John Russell, as the leader of the House of Commons, and as the person who had taken the seals of the Foreign Office on the formation of that Ministry, and who resigned them shortly afterwards to Lord Clarendon, without doubt for the very sufficient reason that no man can efficiently discharge in conjunction, especially at a time of crisis, the duties of the Foreign Department and those attaching to the Leadership of the Commons.

6. It is a favourite idea with some, that we have had handed down from a remote date a traditional policy of upholding the Ottoman Empire, like Portugal or Belgium, without much regard to collateral questions. We believe it would be difficult to establish this doctrine by historical evidence. To those who care to examine the question ever so little, we recommend an examination of the speech of Lord Holland in the debate of January 29, 1828. It was delivered at a time when we were engaged in a policy of coercion against Turkey, out of which, just before, had grown the battle of Navarino. Lord Holland appeared to show in that debate that we had indeed ancient alliances with Russia, that we had no treaty at all with Turkey before 1799, that the treaty then concluded was only for seven years, that it was simply part and parcel of our military measures against France. And it commenced with these words: "His Britannic Majesty, connected already with His Majesty the Emperor of Russia by the ties of the strictest alliance, accedes by the present treaty to the defensive alliance which has just been concluded between His Majesty the Ottoman Emperor and the Emperor of Russia;" together with certain limiting words, which need not be cited in this place.

7. It would be curious to ascertain the precise date at which the idea was first broached, that British interests required the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire. We have little doubt that it is posterior to the debate which has just been cited, and that it was far from being generally recognised by the statesmen of the last generation. It may probably be traced in the policy of 1840, and the armed assistance lent to the decrepit Empire against its Egyptian vassal. It grew, however, with rapidity, fostered by the rather womanish suspicions and alarms on

behalf of India, of which Russia gradually became the object. It has grown with greater rapidity since the Crimean War, in proportion to the increased susceptibility of the country, which has almost learned to regard political alarm as standing in the first class of its luxuries, those namely which are daily and indispensable.

8. It may boldly be affirmed that this doctrine of British interests, as involving a necessity of upholding the Ottoman Empire, was not the avowed doctrine of the British Government in the proceedings immediately anterior to the Crimean War. Some there are at the present day who believe that war to have been a war for British interests, founded upon the traditional policy of maintaining the Porte, with all its crimes, in its "integrity and independence," as the proper bulwark of our own sway in India. Others have thought that we undertook the war upon a ground certainly more chivalrous; that, seeing a weaker country oppressed by a stronger one, we generously interfered on behalf of the weak against the strong. Of course, such a theory provokes the question, how far it is to reach; and whether we, of all mankind, have taken out a general roving commission of knight errantry—

"To ride abroad redressing human wrongs."*

9. The work of Mr. Martin supplies weighty evidence that the policy of the Crimean War was based neither upon the cynical selfishness of the first of these conceptions nor upon the high-flown Quixotry of the last. Unless the Sovereign and her Consort, with their matchless opportunities of knowledge, were absolutely blindfolded, the policy which led us into the war was that of repressing

* Tennyson's 'Guinevere.'

an offence against the public law of Europe, but only by the united authority of the Powers of Europe. Public law and European concert were in truth its twin watch-words. From the pages before us we will now supply the pooof.

"Our conduct throughout," says the Queen, writing to Lord Aberdeen, on April 1, 1854 (p. 59), "has been actuated by *unselfishness* and honesty."

This was at the commencement. At the close, on March 31, 1856, the Queen writes (p. 471) that to Lord Clarendon alone (*i.e.*, alone of those in Paris) "is due the dignified position the Queen's beloved country holds, thanks to a straightforward, steady, and *unselfish* policy throughout."

10. So much for the British interests. On June 21, the Prince Consort delivers a speech at the Trinity House, in which (p. 69) he says:—

"All these difficulties, however, may be considered to be compensated by the goodness of our cause, 'the vindication of the public law of Europe.'"

And also, he proceeds to say, by the French alliance. On July 5, he writes to the Emperor Napoleon (p. 88):—

"Il me sera en outre du plus haut intérêt d'assister à une concentration de troupes de cette noble armée, rangée dans ce moment à côté de la nôtre, pour la défense du droit public européen."

On November 19 he writes to Lord Clarendon (p. 164) that the aim of the war was

"to put a term at last to a policy which threatened the existence of the Ottoman Empire, and, by making all the countries bordering on the Black Sea dependencies of Russia, seriously to endanger the balance of power."

To the King of the Belgians, on February 16, 1855, the Prince writes, complaining of the charges made against us (p. 447); and, among others, of this—that we were "making a tool of France for our own objects in the East (because of India, &c.)" :—

"The truth of the matter, on the contrary, is, that a great European question was at issue, and France and ourselves were, and still are, the only Powers possessed of the firmness, the courage, AND THE DISINTERESTEDNESS to grapple with it."

That other and lower views gradually found acceptance in lower quarters, we do not doubt. But these were the views embraced at the Court, guided as it was by rare integrity, unsurpassed intelligence, and ample *connaissance de cause*.

11. And the language we have cited is in full harmony with the general strain of the correspondence laid before Parliament. At the outset, the quarrel was one between Russia and France in regard to ecclesiastical privileges at the Holy Places. England was but an *amicus curiæ;* and, in that capacity, she thought Russia in the right. As, however, the communications went on, the Czar, unfortunately, committed his case to a special envoy, Prince Menschikoff, whose demands upon the Porte appeared to the British Government to render harmony in the Turkish Empire, if they should be accepted, thenceforth impossible. In the further stages of the correspondence, which had thus shifted its ground, we found ourselves in company with France; and not with France only, but with Europe. At one particular point, it must in fairness be allowed that Russia, with her single rapier, had all her antagonists at a disadvantage. They had collectively accepted, and they proposed to her

a Note, known as the Vienna Note, which she also accepted; and they afterwards receded from it, upon objection taken to it by Turkey. Russia, however, covered the miscarriage of her opponents by sustaining the Turkish interpretation of the words, and thus sheltered their retreat from the support of the document they themselves had framed. But it was not upon this miscarriage that the dispute came to a final issue. The broken threads of negotiation were pieced together; and, about the time when the year expired, a new instrument, of a moderate and conciliatory character, was framed at Constantinople, and approved by the Cabinets of the five Powers, still in unbroken union. It was the rejection of this plan by the Emperor Nicholas, when it was presented to him in January 1854, and not his refusal of the Turkish amendments to the Vienna Note, that brought about the war in the following March.

12. Thus far the Prince and the Queen have enabled us to vindicate the British policy against the accusation of selfishness. Let us now see how it stands on the other side, as against the charge of Quixotry. If it is wholly unwise and unwarrantable for one Power to constitute itself the judge and the avenger of European law, is it wholly wise and reasonable for two? So far as a question of this kind can be answered in the abstract, undoubtedly it is not. It is a precedent by no means free from danger; a couple of States cannot claim for themselves European authority. But this was not the enterprise on which France and England advisedly set out. They began their work, say from the time of the Menschikoff mission, in close association with Austria and with Prussia; and the four together were the only Powers who, by established usage, could represent the concert of

Europe, in a case where the fifth, an only remaining Power of the first order, was itself the panel in the dock. They pursued this work in harmony through the whole of the year 1853. With March 1854 came the crisis. Austria urged the two leading States, England and France, to send in their *ultimatum* to Russia, and promised it her decided support. She redeemed the pledge, but only to the extent of a strong verbal advocacy. Without following out the subsequent detail of her proceedings, she rendered thereafter to the Allies but equivocal and uncertain service; without, however, disavowing their policy either in act or word. It was Prussia, which at the critical moment, to speak in homely language, bolted; the very policy which she had recommended, she declined unconditionally to sustain, from the first moment when it began to assume the character of a solid and stern reality. In fact, she broke up the European concert, by which it was that France and England had hoped, and had had a right to hope, to put down the stubbornness of the Czar, and to repel his attack upon the public law of Europe. The question that these Allies had now to determine was whether, armed as they had been all along with the panoply of moral authority, they would, upon this unfortunate and discreditable desertion, allow all their demands, their reasonings, their professions, to melt into thin air. They were, in the view of public right, perhaps entitled to decline the heavy responsibility of executing alone what they had counselled and designed in company with others. At least there could have been no one with a good title to reproach them. But would such a retreat, such a λιποταξία, by two such Powers, have been for the permanent advantages of European honour, or legality, or peace?

13. We shall now produce evidence of the same class as before, and from the same sources, to show that the views we have thus expressed were those of the British Court at the epoch of the Crimean War. We shall show how indisputably it was there and then believed that the continued concert of Europe would abash the offender, and settle the dispute without bloodshed; how the Powers, and especially the Power, were regarded, which paralysed that concert, and broke it up.

On August 28, 1854 (p. 98), the Prince writes thus to the King of Prussia:—

"The four Powers acted in perfect harmony up to last March, when Prussia rejected the Quadruple Treaty, which Austria, with the wisest intentions, had proposed."

On November 8 (p. 143) he addresses his uncle, King Leopold, and describes the danger that France may be tempted "to cherish her traditional *arrière-pensées* of territorial aggrandisement":—

"This danger, I repeat, Austria, Prussia, and Germany may avert, by acting with us, not in the manipulation of protocols, which leave everything to the exertions of the Western Powers, and have no object but to make sure that no harm is done to the enemy. Such a course is dishonourable, immoral, leads to distrust, and ultimately to direct hostility. Already the soreness of feeling here against Prussia is intense."

And as to France, October 23, 1854 (p. 137):—

"In Boulogne the army, as I now hear, was in hopes to have to fight next year with Prussia."

Much later, on October 29, 1855 (p. 385), the Prince writes to Baron Stockmar:—

"The position taken up by Austria and Prussia is alone to blame for all; and I tremble for the Nemesis!"

14. Mr. Martin himself, describing this condition of sentiment, says (p. 161):—

"As the tragic events of this terrible war were more and more developed, more and more keenly was it felt that all its miseries and carnage might have been prevented, had the German Powers gone heart and hand with those of the West in telling Russia that if she persisted in her aggression on Turkey, she would have to meet them also in the field."

When, however, the fight had been fought, and the allied Powers were about to obtain the fruits of it in a Treaty of Peace, then Prussia made her claim, as one of the great Powers, to take part in the negotiations. With respect to this claim, the Prince shows, on February 16, 1855 (p. 449), that it is inadmissible. Powers must not, he says, take part in the great game of politics, without having laid down their stake:—

"Besides the question here is between Powers who have waged war against each other, and wish to conclude a peace. What right, then, have others to interfere who have taken no part in the conflict, and have constantly maintained that their interests are not touched by the matter in dispute, and that, therefore, they would not take any part in the business?"

Prussia was accordingly excluded from the arrangements between the belligerents; and only afterwards was allowed to appear at the meetings of the Powers for the purpose of considering the general and European arrangements embodied in the Treaty of 1856.

The restrained, and sometimes mysterious, conduct of Austria is repeatedly censured; but her case was entirely distinct. Her occupation of the Principalities had at least the air of a qualified co-operation; her menace of an entire junction with the Allies (p. 425) had to do with

the final succumbing of Russia: and her moral weight was with them throughout.

15. There are those who will draw comparisons, *mutatis nominibus*, between the drama of 1853–6 and that of 1875–8. There was in each case an offender against the law and peace of Europe; Turkey, by her distinct and obstinate breach of covenant, taking on the later occasion the place which Russia had held in the earlier controversy. There were in each case prolonged attempts to put down the offence by means of European concert. In 1853–4, these proceeded without a check until the eve of the war. In 1875–7, the combination was sadly intermittent; but, in the singular and unprecedented Conference at Constantinople, it was, at least, on the part of the assembled representatives, perfectly unequivocal. In 1854, the refusal of Prussia to support words by acts completely altered the situation; and in 1876–7, the assurance conveyed to Turkey from England, that only moral suasion was intended, had the same effect. The difference was that, in 1854–5, two great Powers, with the partial support of a third, prosecuted by military means the work they had undertaken; in 1877 it was left to Russia alone to act as the hand and sword of Europe, with the natural consequence of weighting the scale with the question what compensation she might claim, or would claim, for her efforts and her sacrifices. This outline of a parallel we may leave to the impartial criticism of our readers.

16. Thus far we have seen that the design of the Crimean War was, in its groundwork, the vindication of European law against an unprovoked aggression. It sought, therefore, to maintain intact the condition of the menaced party against the aggressor; or in other words, to defend against Russia the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire.

The condition of the Christian subjects of the Porte in general was a subject that had never before that epoch come under the official consideration of Europe. The internal government of a country, it may safely be laid down, cannot well become the subject of effective consideration by other States, except in cases where it leads to consequences in which they have a true *locus standi*, a legitimate concern on their own particular account, or on account of the general peace. In the case of Greece, an insurrection growing into a civil war, and disturbing the Levant, had created this *locus standi;* and the interference of three Powers, led by Great Britain, had redressed the mischief. No like door had then been opened in the other Christian provinces of Turkey. The dispute upon the Holy Places in 1853 had very partially opened it, when Russia demanded for herself exclusively an enlarged right of intervention on behalf of the Oriental Christians. It thus became necessary, in determining the policy of the future, to take notice of the condition of the subject races. The greatest authorities, and pre-eminently Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, believed in the capacity of the Porte by internal reforms to govern its subjects on the principle of civil equality. The resolution therefore was taken to pursue this end, but without that infringement of the Porte's sovereign rights which Russia had attempted; and this resolution was formally embodied in a protocol at the outbreak of the war by the Allies and by Austria. The conclusion of the peace in 1856 fell to the lot of Lord Palmerston and his colleagues. In the interest of the Porte, and of the general peace of Europe, they cancelled the rights of separate interference previously possessed and claimed by Russia. They took the Principalities under a direct European protection. On behalf

of the subject races generally, they embodied in the treaty the record of the Hatti-humayoum, or edict issued by the Sultan, which purported to establish securely the civil equality of all races and religions in Turkey. This was undoubtedly a covenant on the part of the Sultan. But it was a covenant without penalty for breach; for the Powers expressly renounced any right to call him to account, not however, generally, but only as growing out of the communication he had made. It was thus, in cancelling the Russian treaties with the Porte, that the Powers of Europe first became, by the Treaty of Paris in 1856, responsible, in the last resort, for securing the government of the subject races in Turkey on principles of civil equality.

17. The terms demanded from Russia before the war had been exceedingly moderate. When the war had broken out, the Allies justly availed themselves of their understood right to enlarge these terms. Now, in July 1854, appeared on the ground for the first time the celebrated Four Points. After the fall of Sebastopol, they were again enlarged; a territorial cession, the extinction and not merely the limitation of naval power in the Black Sea, and some provisions relating to the Baltic, were exacted from Russia. In like manner we are now (as far as is known) witnessing the expansion of the minimised demands of the Conference at Constantinople into a real and effective liberation of Bulgaria, the cession of Armenia, and perhaps other conditions. But what it is curious to note is the relative attitudes of the Court and the Cabinet of Lord Palmerston at the time of the Peace. We must look upon that Peace, according to the evidence of Mr. Martin's volume, as due to the Cabinet, and as accepted at Windsor on Constitutional grounds, rather than because

it was approved on its own merits. On March 21, 1856 (p. 470), the Prince writes:—

"The Peace is to be signed on Monday. It is not such as we could have wished; still infinitely to be preferred to the prosecution of the war, with the present complication of general policy."

The views of the Queen are expressed in a letter to the Emperor on April 3 (p. 473):—

"Although sharing in the feeling of the majority of my people, who think this Peace is perhaps a little premature, I feel bound to tell you that I approve highly of the terms in which it is couched, as a result not unworthy of the sacrifices made by us in common during this just war, and as insuring, so far as this is possible, the stability and the equilibrium of Europe."

18. Even those who do not at all think the Peace to have been premature must, as witnesses, corroborate the opinion of Her Majesty with respect to the popular sentiment at the time. This had, during the negotiations of 1853, been calm and moderate in a high degree. It was first thrown into excitement* by the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Sinopè; which, being simply a military *coup*, was, under some unknown code of sentiment, branded as a massacre. The sufferings of the Army during the winter very greatly heightened, as was natural, the susceptibility of the country. But now in October 1854 the Prince writes (p. 137) that men, "if they have seen blood, are no longer the same, and are not to be controlled. . . . The cry now is for the annihilation of Russia." It was much to the credit of Lord Palmerston and his Cabinet, that the Peace was actually made; for

* [Some would place the first symptoms of disturbance in the balance of the popular mind a little, but only a very little, earlier.—W. E. G., 1878.]

it was not without hazard to their popularity that the work was carried through.

19. Such is, we believe, a fair outline of the case of the Crimean War, as it is exhibited in this volume. That war passed through all the phases of popularity; the people, and especially the newspapers, were so fond of it while it lasted, that they were, as we have seen, reluctant to let it end. It is an unquestionable fact, that Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, who stoutly and most disinterestedly opposed it, and who, with the bloom of the Corn Law triumph upon them, were before it began the most popular men in the country, lost for the time, by their opposition to it, all hold upon the general public. The war, however, soon and even rapidly waned in favour. At length it came to be looked upon by many, if not by most, as an admitted folly. The nation appeared to have come round to the opinion of Cobden and of Bright. And yet the war had attained its purpose; which was, to repress effectually the aggression of Russia, and to secure to Turkey breathing-time and full scope for the reform of its government.

20. It may be said that, after all, she did not reform her government. Most true; but it is only within a short time that this fact has become at all generally known to our countrymen. And, moreover, this reform was not, properly speaking, the object of the war, but rather an aim incidental to the conditions of the Peace. Why, then, did it fall into disfavour? Because men estimated its object, not as it appears in this volume, not as it was drawn out in the minds of the statesmen who made the war, but according to their own unauthorised and exaggerated ideas of its aim, and of the position of the several parties. Turkey, it had then been too commonly held,

was a young vigorous country, only wanting an open and calm atmosphere to break out into the beauty and bloom of a young civilisation. Russia was to be cut into morsels, or at the least to be crippled by the amputation of important members. The extravagance of these anticipations led to disappointment; and the disappointment, for which people had themselves, or perhaps their newspapers, to thank, was avenged upon the Crimean War.

21. The persons who are really entitled to vaunt their foresight in this matter, as superior alike to the views of Sovereigns and of statesmen, are the few, the very few, who objected to the war from the beginning to the end, and who founded this objection not upon a philanthropic yet scarcely rational proscription of war under all circumstances and conditions, but upon a deeper insight into the nature and foundations of Mahometan power over Christian races, than had fallen to the lot either of diplomacy or of statesmanship. Of these, perhaps the most distinguished are Mr. Freeman and Dr. Newman, both of whom in 1853 proclaimed the hopeless nature, not of the Ottoman as such, but of the Ottoman ascendancy. Both have republished their works of that date, and Mr Freeman has taken a most active and able part in all the recent controversies; in which, to the surprise of many admirers, the living voice of Dr. Newman has not once been heard.

22. Independently of its actual history, the Crimean War has in various unexpected ways left its mark upon us. The factitious reputation, the thin gloss of character, with which it invested Turkey, enabled that most corrupt of States to ape with effect one great vice of civilisation, by accumulating in twenty years of peace a debt of two hundred millions. The market value of this debt is at

present at most twenty millions; and he would be a sanguine man who could believe that, with the restoration of peace, it could ever reach one-fourth of the sum which Turkey pledged herself to pay. This vast amount was divided between the profits of middlemen, the peculations of Pachas, the unbounded cost of the profligacy of Sultans, the payment of old dividends out of new capitals, and, it must be added, the creation of a highly respectable iron fleet, and of an excellent war *matériel*, which has cost the Russians many a thousand lives. All this, we apprehend, has been done mainly at the charges of France and England, whose joint losses on the Turkish debt may be thought to form a sort of disastrous postscript to the Crimean alliance, and a *pendant* to the hundred and fifty millions which they spent upon the War.

23. There were two other changes, which became perceptible after the conflict, and which ought, perhaps, to be referred to it as a cause. One of them is the more feverish condition of the public mind with regard to affairs abroad.

The long continuance of the French Revolutionary War, and the numerous disasters which preceded a final triumph, mainly due to the intoxication of Napoleon, fairly nauseated the public taste, or appetite, for arbitraments of the sword. Moreover, there had been entailed upon us a debt nominally of eight, but really of nine, hundred millions; a sum which probably represented more nearly a third than a fourth part in value of the entire possessions of the country, so that every man who thought himself owner of three thousand pounds, in truth owned not greatly more than two. Together with this Debt, there was an elaborate system of protective legislation, fettering the industry by which alone our burdens could be borne

or diminished, and a widely spread, and but too natural and intelligible, political disaffection. From 1815 until the Crimean period, the nation may be said to have formed one great peace society; and invasion of the island by a hostile power, though it had been brought so near under Napoleon, was hardly dreamt of.

24. During that period, a fresh guarantee of peace seemed to be afforded us in a close and cordial alliance with France, which seems to have been sublimated, so to speak, into a very notable personal affection between the reigning houses. In August 1855 Her Majesty, habitually measured in thought and expression, says of the Emperor (p. 351):—

"I know few people whom I have felt involuntarily more inclined to confide in, and speak unreservedly to; I should not fear saying anything to him. I felt—I do not know how to express it—safe with him."

A letter on the 29th of the same month ends as follows (p. 522):—

"Permettez que j'exprime ici tous les sentiments de tendre amitié et d'affection avec lesquels je me dis, Sire et cher Frère, de Votre Majesté Impériale la bien bonne et affectionnée Sœur et Amie,

"VICTORIA R."

And even of the Prince the Queen had reported (p. 351):—

"He quite admits that it is extraordinary how very much attached one becomes to the Emperor, when one lives with him quite at one's ease, and intimately."

In 1857, during the Indian Mutiny, our friendship was, as it were, reconsecrated by the invitation of the Emperor to send our troops through France on the way to the East. Yet in 1859, after two short years, our Military and Naval

Estimates were largely augmented, and a new and very costly scheme of fortifications was proposed, under the influence of a general apprehension that invasion from France had become a probable contingency, requiring great schemes of defensive precaution. When the civil war in America led to a vast development of military power, British susceptibility fastened on the United States as its object, and the belief became fashionable that we were to be invaded in Canada. When Germany had obtained, by the War of 1870–1, the greatest triumph recorded in her annals, then it was Germany that was to invade us. In the intervals of these alarms, the danger of India from Russia was always available to sustain this morbid, and somewhat womanish, excitement.

25. The second of the changes, to which we have referred, has been the immense increase in the Military and Naval Estimates since the Crimean War. Without entering into minute details, it may be stated that our average annual expenditure under these heads is much more than twice the amount, at which it was placed in 1835 by the Conservative Government of Sir Robert Peel; and that, after setting aside special expenditure for secondary wars, the average annual charge for the years 1830–50 did not greatly exceed half what it has been for the years 1857–77. It would not be fair to ascribe the whole of this change to the altered humour of the public. Something considerable is due to the change in armaments, and the increased value of labour. Yet we believe it to be the fact that that altered humour, assiduously wrought upon by the professional spirit, and by the promoters of expenditure in general, has been the main cause of the alteration, and not a real and substantive necessity. There has been one important change made, which has of itself constituted a

great and most valuable economy. We have been enabled to give up, in the greater part of our colonies, the dangerous and costly practice of studding them, under a professed notion of defence, with small fractions of the British army. This economy renders yet more striking that vast increase of charge, of which only the increased wealth of the country at large has made it, as a whole, so little disposed to complain.

26. There have been arguments used on behalf of this change of system. One of them has been the growth of Continental armaments. But the chief powers of the Continent have been engaged in wars on a large scale, with which we have had nothing to do. France, Prussia, and Austria have, each of them, had two such wars in the last twenty years. Then it has been a favourite plea that, by keeping liberal military and naval establishments, we should be placed in a state of security and saved from panics. But the result has been exactly the reverse. While our expenditure remained low, the dread of invasion was a thing hardly known. We make this statement advisedly, notwithstanding the reference to panics in and before 1852, mentioned by the Prince in February of that year ('Life,' ii. 433). These supposed panics we take to have been no more than whispers within the Army and the Court. They did not really lay hold on the public mind. But, since our charges began to be progressively and largely augmented, we have had, it may be said, a continuing series of panics, with first one Power and then another as the object of our apprehensions. Again, it has been said, the Duke of Wellington was favourable to the new system. And that is, in some measure, true of the great Duke in his later years; but whoever heard of it when he was Prime Minister, or before old age was upon

him? It was as he approached fourscore, during the Administration of Sir Robert Peel, that the Duke became an alarmist. But it is unquestionable that his fears were, notwithstanding his great authority, regarded by that prudent Minister and his colleagues as due to the commencing weakness of age, and were not allowed to act upon the amounts of force which from year to year they proposed to Parliament for the defence of the country.

27. But, lastly, it was found very convenient to ascribe the very sad sufferings and shortcomings of the winter spent before Sebastopol to the previous economies of the time of peace. Evidently an impression had been made to this effect (p. 486) upon the just and intelligent mind of the Queen herself. But what is the warrant for it? The war broke out; and we, who had no pretensions to be a great military power, actually fought the battle of the Alma with a somewhat larger number of men than France, at that time the first military Power in the world, had been able to find and transport for the purpose. It is said, and is believed, that after that battle the British General felt a confidence in the power of the Allies at once to master Sebastopol, which the French did not feel, and that it was their negative which prevented the attempt. Next, we, who had been paralysed forsooth by economy, had assigned to us the right flank to the south of the fortress, which was the post of danger, while the French forces lay in comparative security between the British and the sea. Upon us, in consequence, came the heavy stress of Inkermann, and right well did our gallant soldiers bear it. True, the ranks of our Army were afterwards miserably thinned by sickness. The country was justly irritated, and demanded inquiry. The demand was met not with a single inquiry, but (little to our credit)

with no less than three. There was one by a Committee of Parliament; one by Royal Commissioners sent to the spot; and one by a Board of Officers at Chelsea. They delivered three different and conflicting verdicts; but no one of them found that the cause of the mischief lay in parsimony practised before the war; the charge is one often and conveniently made, but never proved.

28. It is true, without doubt, that our organisation was deficient in various branches. But it has never been shown that the really needful improvements might not have been made within those general limits of military charge which subsisted during the reign of comparative economy. The truth we believe to be this. Our military authorities were wedded to the antiquated system of soldiering for life, which stands in diametrical opposition to the laws of military practice now universally acknowledged. As long as that system prevailed, it was naturally deemed the most essential point of all to keep up a force, numerically considerable, of old soldiers. To this end not only persuasion, but something like artifice, was addressed. So many regiments were kept in British North America, so many in the West Indies, and in other Colonial garrisons; because this dispersion presented the aspect of a quasi-military service, and a portion of the army was, as it were, kept out of view. The economies were accordingly thrown to some extent upon the wrong points; the *matériel* was very low; a long period was allowed to pass without measures—by far the most vital of all—for improving the condition of the soldier; and the impulse towards those measures, and towards real reform in the Army, when it did come, was a civil rather than a military impulse. Indeed, there is no reason to doubt that in his later years the Duke of Wellington, alarmist as he had become, was also an

obstacle to the detailed and toilsome work of administrative reform in the Army. It had, however, been fairly begun under his pupil, Lord Hardinge, alike an able administrator and an excellent man; and it was in course of prosecution when the Crimean War broke upon us.

29. The Prince could not but bring from Germany military conceptions which were, as to certain aims, much in advance of those current among ourselves; and at the epoch of the war, as well as before it, his active mind was turned to the consideration of our deficiencies. He laid his views before the Government of Lord Aberdeen in an able Memorandum (p. 185), which contains much important matter. He had, indeed, so early as in his letter of February 19, 1852, to the Duke of Wellington, suggested the invaluable system of reserves, which is still so feebly and inadequately worked. In other respects, however, his paper can hardly be said to move upon the lines of Army reformers generally, since it does not include any one of three points which with them were essential! namely, short service for the men, abolition of purchase for the officers, and the abandonment of the expense of garrison forces in colonies other than military posts.

30. We have already pointed out that the character of the Volume before us is historical quite as much as biographical, and we shall further notice in succession two or three points of interest on which it throws a light.

The attachment of the Sovereign and her Consort to Sir Robert Peel, the Duke of Wellington, and Lord Aberdeen, led them to watch with interest the working of the Aberdeen Cabinet, in which the Peelites held no less than six offices, besides having four members of their small party in the most important positions outside the Cabinet. The six Cabinet Ministers were Lord Aberdeen, the Duke

of Argyll,* Sir James Graham, the Duke of Newcastle, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Sydney Herbert. The four outside the door were Mr. Cardwell at the Board of Trade, Lord Canning at the Post Office, Lord St. Germans, Viceroy of Ireland, and Sir John Young, Chief Secretary. Another Cabinet Minister, Sir William Molesworth, was perhaps more nearly associated with them than with the Whigs. Holding this large share of official power, the Peelites did not bring more than about thirty independent votes to the support of the Ministry, in addition to which they neutralised the Opposition of perhaps as many more members who sat on the other side of the House. Mr. Martin says (p. 90), "It was apparent to all the world that no cordial unanimity existed between the Peelite section of the Ministry and their colleagues."

31. This is an entire mistake. It must be stated, to the credit of all parties, but especially of the Whig section of that Cabinet, that although the proportions of official power were so different from those of the voting strength in Parliament, there was no sectional demarcation, nor any approach to it, within the Cabinet. In proof of this statement, it may be mentioned that when, in the recess of 1853–4, Lord Palmerston had resigned his office on account of the impending Reform Bill, and it was desired to induce him to reconsider his decision, the two persons who were chosen for the duty of communicating to him the wish of his colleagues were the Duke of Newcastle and Mr. Gladstone. Not even when the Eastern Question became the engrossing subject of the day was a sectional

* The Duke of Argyll was invited at a very early age, on account of his high personal character and his talent, to enter the Cabinet of Lord Aberdeen, but he did not belong to the ex-official corps who passed by the name of Peelites, while he was in political accordance with them.

division to be traced. It may be true, if *nuances* are to be minutely investigated, that the Peelite colour was on the whole a shade or two more pacific than the Whig; but even this is true of the leading individuals rather than of the sections, and it may be safely affirmed that, of all the steps taken by that Government during the long and complicated negotiations before the Crimean War, there was not one which was forced, as will sometimes happen, by a majority of the Cabinet upon the minority. Rifts there were without doubt in the imposing structure, but they were due entirely to individual views or pretensions, and in no way to sectional antagonism.

32. The retirement of Lord Aberdeen was a subject of grief to the Court and to his friends; but he was so far fortunate that, having been made the victim of a cry, partly popular and partly due to political feeling, he was saved, as was the Duke of Newcastle, from the responsibility of an act of difficult and doubtful choice. Their friends, Sir James Graham, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Sidney Herbert, were less happy. It was their fate to join the Cabinet of Lord Palmerston, formed at a critical juncture, after some delay and difficulty, and then to quit it within a fortnight or three weeks. The cause was simply and solely this. The Aberdeen Government had resisted, unanimously and strongly, the appointment of what was termed the Sebastopol Committee. The Palmerston Government set out with the intention of continuing that resistance. Its Head, and the majority of its members, arrived at the conclusion that the resistance would be ineffectual; and they determined to succumb. The Peelites adhered to their text; and, as the minority, they in form resigned, but in fact, and of necessity, they were driven from their offices. Into the rights of the question we shall not

enter; but, undoubtedly, they were condemned by the general opinion out of doors. Moreover, as in the letting out of water, the breach, once made, was soon and considerably widened. They had been parties in the Cabinet, not only to the war, but to the extension, after the outbreak had taken place, of the conditions required from Russia. But when it appeared that those demands were to be still further extended, or were to be interpreted with an unexpected rigour, and that the practical object of the Ministerial policy appeared to be a great military success in prosecuting the siege of Sebastopol to a triumphant issue, they declined to accompany the Ministry in their course. Again they met with the condemnation of the country; and the Prince Consort, while indicating his high opinion of the men, has recorded (p. 298 *et alibi*) his adverse judgment. One admission may perhaps be made in their favour. In the innumerable combinations of the political chessboard, there is none more difficult for an upright man than to discern the exact path of duty, when he has shared in bringing his country into war, and when, in the midst of that war, he finds, or believes himself to find, that it is being waged for purposes in excess of those which he had approved.

33. The course of the Sebastopol inquiries likewise tended to show that the high Constitutional doctrine which they had set up could not be infringed with impunity. They had held that the inquiry was an executive duty, and could only be conducted aright by a Commission under the authority of the Crown. The country felt, or thought, it had obtained a triumph by the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee, which was capped, as we have said, by a Commission, this in its turn being traversed by a Board of Officers. The Committee censured the Ministers;

though it was plain that, in the business of supply, they, and Mr. Sidney Herbert in particular, with an indefatigable diligence, had run far ahead of any demands received from the camp. The Commission censured the executive departments of the army on the spot. The Board of Officers acquitted the military, and censured the commissariat at home. No attempt was permitted to try the question to its core, as between these conflicting judgments. Mr. Roebuck very properly made a motion to bring the Report of his Committee under the consideration of the House, when the other two competing verdicts would have been compared with it, and with one another. The Peelites supported his motion. But he was defeated by a large majority; so that the question which broke up one Cabinet, and formidably rent another, which agitated England and sorely stained her military reputation in the eyes of Europe, remained then, and remains now, untried by any court of final appeal. Nor did this determined smothering of so great a matter cause public displeasure. On the contrary, as Mr. Martin observes (p. 308), it gave satisfaction. The feeling, he says truly, was turned into other channels. "The past could not be mended—best leave it alone." The nation was befooled; and befooled with pleasure, and by its own act.

34. A survey of these years, conducted in an historic spirit, will, we think, leave on the mind, among other impressions, a sense of the great incidental evils which accompany the breaking up of those singularly, but finely and strongly, organised wholes, our known political parties. Together with Sir Robert Peel, nearly the whole official corps of the Conservatives was discharged in 1846; and the discharge proved to be a final one. The Tories, when brought into office, had to supply the highest places with

raw, that is to say, fresh, recruits. This could not be without some detriment to the public service; but justice requires the admission that the body of English gentry, trained in the English fashion, affords material of great aptitude for public life. There were evils on the other side much more serious than this. It took no less than thirteen years to effect the final incorporation of the Peelites into the Liberal party. When they took their places among its leaders, the official staff on one side was doubled, as on the other side it was almost annihilated. It is possible that to this duplication ought greatly to be attributed those personal discontents and political cross-purposes for which the Liberal party has of late years been disastrously remarkable. Moreover, for eleven out of these thirteen years of disembodied existence, the Peelites were independent members. They were like roving icebergs, on which men could not land with safety, but with which ships might come into perilous collision. Their weight was too great not to count, but it counted first this way and then that. It is not alleged against them that their conduct was dishonourable, but their political action was attended with much public inconvenience; and even those who think they were enlightened statesmen may feel that the existence of these sensibly large segments of a representative chamber, in a state of detachment from all the organisation of party, acts upon the Parliamentary vessel as a cargo of corn in bulk acts, in foul weather, on the trim of a ship at sea. Again, as a party, they had been, like their leader, pacific and economical. The effects of their separation from official Liberalism during the first Government of Lord Palmerston were easily traceable in the policy of that Government as to various matters of importance. From this time onwards Lord

Aberdeen was in retirement, and Peelism ceased to be, as such, in contact with the Court, at which it had certainly weighed as an important factor of political opinion.

35. The Prince resembled Lord Aberdeen in this, that, with an eminently just and liberal mind, he clung to traditions of Continental policy, or these traditions clung to him which were by no means uniformly liberal. We cannot but trace his hand in the recognition (p. 44) of the Five Great Powers as having been, "since the peace of 1815," the guarantors of treaties, the guardians of civilisation, the champions of right. When Sardinia was struggling for the liberation of Italy, and when she had acted as a very timely ally in the Crimean War, Belgium is emphatically described (p. 501) as "the only satisfactory child of the new epoch": and in conversation with Louis Napoleon in 1854, the Prince wished, indeed, that Austria were out of Lombardy for Austria's own sake, but held that she could not recognise its title to an Italian nationality, and that she must hold it for the sake of her military frontier (p. 119). But the reconstituted Italy has thus far been in European politics a Power eminently Conservative; and the only fear is lest she should be seduced, by the bad example of other Powers, into speculations and schemes of territorial aggrandisement.

36. We have still to offer a remark on the important subject of the Danubian Principalities, which is touched by Mr. Martin. Subsequently to the Peace of Paris, Moldavia and Wallachia were united into one State under the name of Roumania, and after a time there was placed at its head a foreign Prince. To this measure Austria and the Porte were strongly opposed; and we grieve to say that the influence of official England was thrown into their scale. Its adoption was mainly due to the sound instinct and the

decided action of the people of the two Provinces; which Russia at the very least thought it prudent not to thwart, and which France energetically favoured, and helped onwards to a successful issue. Lord Clarendon expressed the opinion (p. 466) that, if these Provinces were united under a foreign Prince, such a Prince would in a few years be able to declare his independence.

37. Mr. Martin, strangely enough to our mind, says that events have shown how just were these apprehensions (p. 465). Is this just? What are the facts? That for twenty years, though the misgovernment of Turkey would at any moment have afforded a pretext, Roumania remained in nearly motionless submission to the suzerainty of the Porte; that she did absolutely nothing to assist the abortive Bulgarian rebellion of May 1876; that she showed no sympathy with the Servian and Montenegrin wars of that summer; and that she did not take a step of any kind in opposition to the Porte, until the overpowering might of Russia demanded a military passage through her territory, and virtually forced her into active hostilities. Had Turkey fulfilled the promises of civil equality which she has shamelessly and obstinately broken, but which Lord Clarendon honestly believed she would be able and disposed to keep, what opportunity would Roumania have had, even if so inclined, to rise against Turkey? Did not her quietude, during nearly two years of troubles, partly bursting, and partly festering, on her frontier, show how wise it had been to give her contentment and some solidity of existence? "If Moldavia and Wallachia had continued in their state of severance and weakness, it would have either been not more difficult, but much easier, for Russia to agitate them by intrigue during the tranquil years 1856-75, or to issue her commands in

1877 for supplying a free passage through their land to her armies.

38. But we cannot have any quarrel with Mr. Martin. We must part from him in the good humour which gratitude inspires. In the production of his work, he is without doubt ministering to the just demand of a fond and unquenchable affection in the highest place. But he is also performing a great service to the country: he gives the permanence of the written record to a life of public duty, which is certainly the most conspicuous that the nineteenth century has witnessed. It is perhaps also the noblest and the purest: the only rival to it in these respects, that we are bold enough to name, is the life of the noble-minded man who died as Earl Spencer, but who was better known as Lord Althorp.

We venture to hope that Mr. Martin's labours will not end either with three volumes, or with the fourth; but that when his work is completed, he will with new energy reduce it to a form suited for a wide popular circulation. Outside the circle of domestic affections, the proper place for the Prince's memory to repose in is the heart of the people.

V.

THE COUNTY FRANCHISE, AND MR. LOWE THEREON.*

1. Mr. Lowe† and I are, in some respects, not ill fitted for a friendly duel on the subject of the representation of the people in Parliament. He did not confer, and I did not inflict, a speech on the House of Commons, when the subject was recently under discussion. We are agreed, as I believe, on most questions of politics, indeed rather closely agreed on some important matters, such as public thrift, in which few agree with either of us; and we are united, as I hope, in mutual regard. Moreover, we have already, many years ago, exhibited opposite leanings upon the question whether the general idea of extension of the suffrage is one which ought to be viewed with favour, or the reverse. For my part, whatever may be the case with Mr. Lowe, I have this chance at least of relative impartiality, that I look upon the cause as one which calls upon me for adhesion as an individual, but not for the guidance of others in any larger capacity. But further, our history has now reached a point, at which it is well that the subject of a further extension of popular franchises should be "bolted to the bran." For we are again, as we were in 1854, in 1860, and in 1866, open to one of the greatest

* Reprinted from *The Nineteenth Century* for November 1877.
† See *Fortnightly Review*, October 1877.

moral dangers that can beset the politics of a self-governed country—the danger of having a great question insincerely dealt with.

2. By the large majority of the Liberal party the principle of such an extension was adopted long ago. It has now the deliberate sanction of the leader in each House; and neither Lord Granville nor Lord Hartington is a man given to deal lightly with serious matters. The Ministers have resisted it with arguments only temporary and conventional; arguments which a breath may at any moment blow away. Their real objection to conceding it is plain. It is not a definite fear of the vote which the agricultural householders would give, but a fear of irritating and estranging the farming class by empowering their labourers to give a vote at all; by placing in a minority that class which now has the command of the agricultural constituencies, and thus exchanging a certain and well-disciplined support for a doubtful many-sided chance. In a word, they are playing with the question. They desire the credit of a settlement, and are ready to step in between the Liberal leaders and their work; but they are unwilling to provoke dangers to their party, now asleep. The only thing that can be predicted of them with certainty is, that they will do the exact opposite of that which was done by Sir Robert Peel in 1829 and 1846: they will handle the subject, to the best of their judgment, as one which may legitimately be used, either by adoption or by a faint and procrastinating repulse, as shall best suit the interests of their party. But this is a motive which, even in cases where it may be fairly entertained, cannot always, for various reasons, be professed. So the speech of the present majority will say one thing, while its heart conceals another. Here and there may possibly be found a

Liberal whose line will be not identical, but parallel, so as to strike the front of the same adversaries, or converging, so as to reach the same conclusion.

3. It is in this sense that we are in danger of having the question insincerely dealt with. But not by Mr. Lowe. Upon the whole, I think we have not, in the whole array of our public men, a more ingenuous, a more artless, any more than we have a more logical or trenchant, reasoner. Whatever subject he touches, his first object is, like Ajax, to drag it into light: into such a light as Tennyson would call a fierce light. Those who do not agree with him may say that it is a light like the lights of Rembrandt, which leave much of the picture in deep shadow; but, if we think so, it is open to us to do our best to get these also under the eye of day. And I believe myself to agree with Mr. Lowe in a proposition which, as I think, lies deeper than any of the particular arguments directly bearing upon the question.

4. It is this: that the liberties of our fellow-subjects form a theme of too high a nature to be determined by the interests of party. They ought to be extended, irrespective of their effects on party, to the furthest point compatible with the well-being of the Constitution, with the established public order under which they live. They are a gift so good in themselves, so full of educating power, so apt to enhance and multiply the aggregate of the nation's energies, that nothing can equitably be placed in competition with them, unless it be the security of that public order. How far this competition ever has occurred, or is likely to occur, among us, I will inquire by-and-bye For the present, I only urge that the principles of party combination are unduly extended and uplifted, when they are either openly avowed, or inwardly permitted to operate,

as a reason either for withholding liberty, or for endangering that public order. Party is a legitimate and necessary, but essentially a secondary and subordinate, instrument for promoting the public good. Mr. Lowe, with perfect consistency, compromised in 1866 the power and position of his party on the principle which he was right in deeming higher than party (had it been at issue); namely, that the Constitution ought not to be put into the hands of men unfit to work it. He is justified in protesting against every renewed indication from the Tories that they mean to repeat the manœuvre, the plot, the education, call it what we may, of 1867; and in calling on them, though he might as well call upon the statues of the Vatican, or the bones and vases disinterred by Dr. Schliemann, to decide this question on its merits, whatever they may be. But he and I must alike be prepared to stand the recoil of our own guns, even though the "kick" may be inconvenient. We have no right to withhold the household franchise from the counties on the ground that the peasantry will in the long-run follow the parson and the squire, so as to strengthen the hands of the Tory party; and that it is better for the country to have a more restricted constituency in the main Liberal, rather than a more enlarged one in the main Tory. Against this I set up the proposition that whatever be the effect on party, it is better that a nation preferring self-government should be self-governed; that the basis should be consistent as well as wide; and that privilege and franchises should not be tossed about by caprice, but distributed with a firm and an even hand.

5. Before 1832, the Parliamentary Constitution of this country was full of flaws in theory, and blots in practice, that would not bear the light. But it was, notwithstanding, one of the wonders of the world. Time was its

parent; Silence was its nurse. Until the American Revolution had been accomplished it stood alone (among all great countries) in the world. Whatever its defects, it had imbibed enough of the free air of heaven to keep the lungs of liberty in play. Some of its worst deeds, such as the repeal in 1754 of the law passed the year before in favour of the Jews,* were due not to its excluding, but to its admitting, the influence of popular opinion. It did much evil, and it left much good undone; but it either led, or did not lag behind, the national feeling and opinion. If on any great long-enduring question it was in conflict with the wish of the majority of the nation, that question was the exclusion of the Stuarts from the throne: and who shall say that here the nation was right, and the Parliament was wrong? If the American war and the Revolutionary war were great errors, they were not less pardonable than they were great; and in any case they were wars undertaken in consonance with the feeling of the country. Upon the whole, perhaps, the domestic policy, which for a decade of years followed the close of the great Revolutionary war, forms the most discreditable chapter in its history: but this is only a repetition of a lesson, that mankind is all too dull and slow to learn; the lesson, that war, except it be fought for liberty, is the most deadly enemy of liberty.

6. The Parliamentary Constitution of our fathers was a mosaic; like that Cabinet, the Cabinet of Lord Chatham, the composition of which has been embedded, by the eloquent description of Mr. Burke, in the permanent literature of the country. The forms and colours of the bits that made it up were indeed yet more curious. It

* See May, *Const. Hist.* ii. 266 (third ed.).

included every variety of franchise, from pure nomination by an individual down or up to household suffrage; say from zero to what is deemed infinity. It gave to the aristocracy, and to landed wealth, the preponderance, of which the larger part has now been practically handed over to wealth at large. Subject always to this confession, it made an admirable provision for diversity of elements, for the representation of mind, for the political training, from youth upwards, of the most capable material of the country. In those days, the idea of the representation of labour by members of the labouring class had not come to the birth: if it had, who shall say that greater difficulty than now need have been experienced in giving it practical effect? Generally, in the special respects I have named, the old Parliamentary Constitution was, I believe, intrinsically more favourable to the public interests than our present system. It might also be held, that expenditure as a whole was more economical, and that mere cliques and sections of the community had not means equal to those, which they now so assiduously employ, for pushing their own interests against the interests of the nation. But it is hard to say what share of the mischief may be due to the more highly organised state of society, the greater activity of its forces, the readier intercommunication of its parts; not to mention the large cost incurred in the recognition and supply of real public wants, to which formerly no heed, or no effectual heed, was given. It may, however, well be doubted whether, if Parliament had sooner been reformed, Roman Catholic Emancipation would have been passed as early as in 1829; and whether, if it had been reformed later, the Corn Laws might not, with loss of strain and effort, have been repealed before 1846.

7. One of my objects in this brief retrospect is to suggest what party prejudice appears to forget, that the true character of our working Parliamentary system is not determined exclusively by the condition of the franchise and what is termed the distribution of seats. Another is to make an apology for those who felt that, in surrendering the former system as a whole, to substitute for it the scheme of 1832, they were committing themselves to a series of changes, and not to one alone. The convictions of men like Mr. Burke, Lord Grenville, Mr. Canning, Mr. Hallam, in its favour, represent something much higher, much more historical, than has since been, or could be, arrayed in defence of schemes, essentially intermediate and provisional, against further modification. For be it remembered, that the old system was not condemned principally for its working demerits. With the repeal of the Test Act and the Roman Catholic disabilities, with the initiation of Free Trade and the retrenchment of the Wellington Government in such fresh remembrance, it hardly could be so condemned. It was for anomaly and inequality amounting to caricature; for the representation of the Peerage in a popular chamber; above all, it was upon the general doctrine of self-government, and for the general exclusion of a class, whose fitness none dared to impeach, from the franchise.

8. That class was the middle class. But that class does not to my knowledge carry upon it, like the Kings of the heroic age, any exclusive note of divine descent. If it had no such note, and if it was admitted for its qualifications, then we must inquire, as occasion offers, what other portions of the adult male community, or whether indeed the mass of that community, under only the conditions of due verification and of order, has its qualifi-

cations also. Here we have, without doubt, a fair subject of argument. But it will not do to plead the formidable aspect of a long list of ciphers, and to say we have admitted so many that we are tired, and really cannot admit any more.

9. Nor I think will it suffice to threaten, as Mr. Lowe threatens, us with a tumble down the precipice, towards which he says we are rapidly gliding, and at the foot of which we shall be smashed to atoms. The argument has lost its force by its repetition, like the promises of Turkish reform. We have the advantage of experience. We have fallen down these precipices, and know what it is. We fell down a precipice in 1832, a much higher precipice than any now before us, and were greatly the better for it. We fell down another precipice in 1867, and we are, to say the least, none the worse. "Leaping in the dark" I do not recommend; but I contend that there is light enough. The middle class were admitted, because they were loyal to our institutions, sober and thoughtful in disposition, having access to political information, reasonably capable of forming a judgment on public affairs, well disposed to defer to the opinion and advice of those who might be more capable still. In 1867 we determined, and in that year and 1869 we gave full effect to the determination, that the householders in towns were so far possessed of these qualities in the aggregate, that they likewise ought to possess the franchise. And now the question is raised whether it ought not, on like grounds, to be given to householders in the counties. There is not one of them who, if he moved into a town and dwelt in the meanest hovel there, would not have what we want to give him. *Prima facie* they have had a plea, at least since the Act of 1867.

To get rid of this plea, we must put forth something in bar of it. Some answer or other must be lodged. What shall the demurrer be? Shall it be inferiority of qualification? Shall it be the essential difference, or the Constitutional distinction, between county and town constituencies? Or shall it be this: we have made one false step already; it is irretrievable; but we will not make another. Or are we to be deterred from political liberality by mechanical difficulties, and by the assumed necessity of an increase in the costliness, already so mischievous, of elections?

10. I will endeavour to deal with these objections successively. But let me begin with dismissing very briefly any objection founded on the idea of essential distinction between town and county representation. We have too many towns, both real and considerable, and too large a town population, in the counties, and too many little bits of counties figuring under the name of towns, to be warranted in urging this distinction as a barrier to a great enfranchisement. We may still, if we like, mark off our county representation proper by the present, or even by enlarged, franchises from property; but most men will agree that the argument upon county household-suffrage must be decided on grounds and pleas other than this.

11. And first, as to the great matter, that of qualification. There is really, if we carry the strict sense of the word to its extreme, no such thing. No man is perfectly qualified either for judging or for conducting the affairs of this great empire. It is a question of degree, who are the least disqualified; and "qualification" is therefore a relative term. Now one element of qualification, thus understood, is interest. This element is found in county householders, at least as much as in those of the town: for itinerancy tends to abate the full sense of it, and

itinerancy prevails less in counties than in towns. Another is the disposition, the desire, to judge rightly and patriotically of public questions. Here the greatest disabling causes are selfishness and passion. Now, in regard to selfishness, the more formidable of the two, a long experience impresses me with the belief that this evil temper does not grow in intensity as we move downwards in society from class to class. I rather believe that, if a distinction is to be drawn in this respect, it must be drawn in favour of, and not against, the classes (if such they should be called) which are lower, larger, less opulent, and, after allowing fully for trades unions, less organised.

12. As to popular passion, its serious operation in our own time and country is rare. When it does operate upon a mass of men, a very formidable case may conceivably arise. It is difficult to reason with the passions of an individual or of a few; with those of a multitude, once aroused, it is impossible. But it is also obvious that, so far as the passionate susceptibilities of multitudes of men deserve to be taken into account, the topic may be used far more effectively against those whom we have admitted than against those whom we have not. The town populations dwell in masses closely wedged together, and they habitually assemble in crowds for the purposes of many of their occupations. It is in this state of juxtaposition that political electricity flies from man to man with a violence which displaces judgment from its seat, and carries off individual minds in a flood by the resistless rush of sympathy. The carter, the ploughman, the cowherd, the great bulk, in fact, of agricultural labourers, work habitually in absolute or comparative dispersion, and, with them, sober-mindedness

might more readily lapse into gloom and torpor, than mount into dangerous excitement.

13. As to mental training, indeed, and intellectual competency, the case is somewhat different. Yet even here one of the great advantages of a wide suffrage comes into view. It is, that every section of the community knows something, and something material to the general weal, which the other sections do not know. Every section can thus make a contribution to the common stock which, without its intervention, must be wanting. There are some questions on which a lower class not only may, but must be, better qualified to judge than a higher one. With respect to intellectual, not moral, competency generally, I admit that it is leisure, training, and culture which give not only the broadest and firmest, but the most elastic capacity for the treatment of public questions. Were we beings of pure intellect, or were the operations of the understanding unaffected by interest and "partial affection," the argument would be very strong for something like the Russian Government: for giving a monopoly of political power to the most highly educated persons. And I own it appears to me that this is the legitimate upshot of many of the arguments used in 1866, and again at this time, against the enlargement of the suffrage. The answer is, that no single portion of the community is fit to be trusted with absolute power; and that those portions of it which have less of leisure, of intellectual training, and of general capacity for affairs, may notwithstanding make up for the deficiency by a disposition practically to admit its existence, and to lean, freely and confidingly, on the judgments of those who have superior opportunities, and have also, or are supposed to have, superior fitness of all kinds. Independence, of which I have yet to speak,

and which is justly reckoned among the valuable qualifications of an elector, is the counterpoise to this (so to call it) adjective tendency; but the two are not, except in their abuse, contradictory one to the other.

14. At this point let us suspend for a moment the process of handling this and that particular argument; and let us look at the question a little more at large according to political justice: that is to say, according to common sense, applied to the particular province in which lie such questions of right and wrong as arise out of the relations of political society. For the present, I shall so far proceed upon a *petitio principii* as to assume (1) that we are considering the case of adult males, neither disqualified by mental infirmity, nor deprived of liberty on account of crime, nor loading the community with the cost of their subsistence; (2) that in questions of political fitness we have to deal with this or that section in the mass, and not with the eccentric and exceptional cases of individuals; (3) that in practice the question before us is simply that of household suffrage in the counties.

15. There is something so shocking to the nerves in the idea of anything like universal suffrage, especially if combined with equal electoral districts, that, in the ears of many, it sounds like universal murder. Not even in the white heat of his alarm does Mr. Lowe believe that we are as yet sufficiently depraved to entertain it. "That will come in its own sweet time . . . but not just yet."* Let us look a little more closely into the face of this monster, and try to scan its features. What does the thing mean? It means that adult males, subjects of Her Majesty, not specially disabled, and duly identified by

* *Fortnightly Review*, Oct. 1876, p. 445.

public authority as to place and particulars, should have the power of exercising by a vote an influence on the government of the country.

Now about rights I will not argue: for the very introduction of the word is apt to have a maddening effect; and many, who will teach and preach to the uttermost, and without the smallest qualification, the right of property, as if it were the Eleventh commandment, seem to forget that, apart from degree, it is in kind the same as the right of franchise—that is to say, it is good for the community, and its limits and conditions are to be decided by the community, through its proper organs. Let us then reason upon another line, that of qualification. There are some reasons why it is well that each man should have such a power as the vote confers. First, by his rates, his taxes, or his use of consumable articles, he is a contributor to the public revenue. Secondly, by his labour (we are not now dealing with the owner of capital) he is a contributor to the public wealth. Thirdly, in more than nine cases out of ten, he has given pledges to society by constituting himself the head of a family, in which is lodged a large part of his affections. Fourthly, as he is possessed of the means of making himself useful, so also he is largely possessed of the means of making himself, as pauper, vagabond, criminal, or otherwise, mischievous and burdensome to the nation. Now it is to be desired that all those who live in a country should take an interest in that country: should love that country. One of the means of fostering such an interest and such a love is to invest them with a share in affairs common to others with themselves. On this principle, from the earliest times, our local and parochial governments have been constructed. It does not at first sight appear why

its operation should stop here: why it may not be extended with advantage to the general government of the country, with its larger perspective, its more elevating and ennobling topics. Presumptively, it will be good for him, and for it, that he should be led by the vote to take an interest, to feel that he has a share, in its affairs. He will love it all the better; he will serve it all the more faithfully.

16. But then we are fairly met by the observation, that while the numerical force of votes is equal, the men who give them are unequal. The right of governing, says Mr. Burke, lies in wisdom and virtue. The extremes of difference in capacity, according to these qualifications, are separated almost immeasurably. While it is easy to maintain that each man may with advantage have some share of political power, it is unreasonable, nay absurd as I think, to hold in the abstract that all ought to have an equal share. Presumptively, again, the shares ought to vary with the intellectual and moral fitness. But no scale has ever been discovered by which such an adjustment could be effected. So far, then, as abstract reasoning is concerned, we seem to have arrived at that awkward predicament, a *reductio ad absurdum*: if we cannot give that which men ought to have, without also giving that which they ought not. But let us not despair.

17. In the first place, the argument of unequal capacity does not tell so uniformly against the more numerous classes of the community as might be supposed. Whether from moral causes, or for whatever other reason, the popular judgment, on a certain number of important questions, is more just than that of the higher order. And, thus far, they are not more incapable, but more capable. In the second place, our laws attempt to vindi-

cate the authority of mind, as a political element, by giving a certain number of seats in Parliament to our Universities; with some evil, and some good, results. In the third place, the rude and unsatisfactory, but yet practically available, criterion of property has assigned to it a considerable sphere of direct operation, through plurality of franchises, arranged under rules to which the country is accustomed, and which no one wishes to disturb. Hence, while we very rarely find a labourer who has more than one vote, it is almost as rare to find a man of property who has not, in different capacities and constituencies, two, three, or more, even up to six, or eight, or ten. Besides this, property has a sphere of indirect operation larger still; within which, sometimes by undue means, but sometimes also without any such taint, it exercises a very widely spread influence.

18. From these sources we draw some rather important limitations to the two propositions on which an adversary would be disposed to take his stand; and which are:—

(1.) That the higher, or leisured class, is the class which ought to govern.

(2.) In the words of Mr. Lowe,* "that while you are dreaming of equality you are creating the grossest inequality, by placing the minority, in which are included the rich and the educated, at the mercy of those who live by daily labour."

But this inequality, this numerical superiority of those nearest the ground, is inherent in all representative government. Let society be a cone, or a pyramid; it is always so constituted that, as we descend from the apex to the base, the numbers of each successive layer down-

* *F. R. ibid.* p. 449.

wards always exceed the numbers of all the layers above it. It is not like an arithmetical progression, 1, 2, 3, 4; but more like a geometrical progression, 1, 2, 4, 8, and so on in each series respectively. The gentry, landed and commercial, are more numerous than the aristocracy: the farmers and tradesmen are more numerous than the aristocracy, *plus* the gentry: the artisans are more numerous than the aristocracy, *plus* the gentry, *plus* the farmers and tradesmen. If the objection drawn from the preponderance of numbers in the lowest enfranchised class is good for anything, it is fatal to every true representative government in the world. But it is confuted by the facts. Our knights and burgesses did not eat up our earls and barons. Our middle class did not eat up the gentry and aristocracy. The artisans have not eaten up the three.

19. In order to entitle it to weight, the objection ought to include proof, not only of severance of interest, but likewise of an intention or disposition to act upon the particular and separate interest against the general interests of the whole. But this vicious selfishness, this *particularismus*, as the Germans would call it, although it exists abundantly in many small knots and sections of the community, is not found to an appreciable extent in any of its great, and so to speak natural, or organic, divisions. Our last great experiment has now been at work for a decade of years: one Parliament has lived and died, another has been born and is growing old; and not a single act of injustice has either of them perpetrated in the interest of the labouring class. We need not stop to ask what would have been said if they had inflicted on the uppermost portions of society one half of such an injustice as was inflicted on the lower by

the Act of 1814.* With what other acts of injustice either of them may be chargeable is another matter; but in the interests of the labouring class, they are chargeable with none. Is it not idle then, and more than idle, if we set up an imaginary disposition as the demonstration of an imaginary danger, and flourish these idols in the face of the country as though they were solid arguments against a proposal, which does not even raise the shadow of a Constitutional question, but aims only at giving to the second moiety of our householding labourers what we have already given to the first?

20. Mr. Lowe thinks that the arguments of those favourable to household suffrage in the counties are "simply and solely an appeal to the love of equality." The word has here an ambiguity, which I must endeavour to unravel. It is not well to distribute the franchise on the principles of a lottery, or arbitrarily to withhold from one member of a class what is given to another, on no principle more intelligible to his mind than that of an invisible local line, which is not drawn according to employment, education, character, means, or any other intelligible distinction. It is well, for example, that the peasant of Wilton and the peasant of Wilts, the peasant of Wallingford and the peasant of Berks, the peasant of Bassetlaw and the peasant of Notts, should be treated alike in respect to the franchise. The same holds with respect to the artisan, the miner, the mill-and-forge man of Stourbridge, compared

* Is not Mr. Lowe a little hard on the universal suffrage of France, when he charges on it a protective tariff, seeing that the no-suffrage of Russia has one tenfold more protective; and also the prohibition of free speech and free writing, when it is engaged in a great national struggle against the enemies of its law of universal suffrage who uphold that prohibition, and enforce it by fine and imprisonment? (*F. R. ibid.* p. 447.)

with his compeer in Dudley; and so elsewhere. That is to say, distinctions should be intelligible and not fantastic. In this sense, the arguments for the extension have something to do with equality. But that is not the equality dreaded by its opponents. The equality dreaded by its opponents is the broad political theorem, that all men are born equal, and ought to continue so.

21. With this bastard political theorem, the arguments for the extension have not anything to do. If they had, they would not take that strong hold on the English mind which now excites Mr. Lowe's alarms. There is no broad political idea which has entered less into the formation of the political system of this country than the love of equality. The love of justice, as distinguished from equality, is strong among our countrymen; the love of equality, as distinguished from justice, is very weak. It was not the love of equality which induced the working men of England to struggle with all their might in 1831–2 for a Reform Act, which not only, as they knew full well, did not confer the vote upon their class at large, but which provided for the extinction of the truly popular franchises theretofore existing in Preston, in Newark, and in many other places. It was not the love of equality which induced the artisans and peasants in the counties to view with satisfaction the passing of a law in 1867 that denied to them what is given to the artisans and peasants (of whom by-and-bye) in the boroughs. It is not the love of equality which has carried into every corner of the country the distinct undeniable popular preference, whenever other things are substantially equal, for a man who is a lord over a man who is not.

22. In truth, the love of freedom itself is hardly stronger in England than the love of aristocracy; as Sir

William Molesworth, himself not the least of our political philosophers, once said to me of the force of this feeling with the people; "it is a religion." It is not the love of equality which lifts to the level of a popular toast at every average or promiscuous public dinner the name of the House of Lords. And this, although the stereotyped reply to the toast will never be found to allege, that from the House of Lords, as from the highest focus of political intelligence, have proceeded the whole, or a large part, or any part whatever, of the great legislative measures which have conferred renown upon the age. The speaker, who "responds," is commonly content to urge that the House of Lords has not (since 1832) pushed its resistance to these measures up to such a point as to endanger the peace of the country. The great strength of the House of Lords in popular estimation does not, so far as I can judge, lie in its legislative performances, nor even in the vast possessions of its members; but in the admirable manner in which a large proportion of them, without distinction of politics, perform public and social duties in their local, yet scarcely private, spheres. And it is the love, not of equality, but of inequality, among the people, which makes these noblemen almost kings in their minor yet far from narrow circles, and permits their fellow-countrymen to contemplate, for the most part without the slightest admixture of envy, their favoured lot.

23. I am sorry that Mr. Lowe's penetrating, almost piercing, power of view has not faithfully exhibited to him so great and capital a feature in the character of his countrymen. Not only is it a thing desirable for a political observer to take this property of the British character into view, but it is absolutely indispensable; and without it our history must be to him a series of riddles,

to which there is no key. Call this love of inequality by what name you please, the complement of the love of freedom, or its negative pole, or the shadow which the love of freedom casts, or the reverberation of its voice in the halls of the constitution; it is an acting, living, and life-giving power, which forms an inseparable essential element in our political habits of mind, and asserts itself at every step in the processes of our system.

24. Hence it is that the Reform Act of 1832 proved to be a safe and even a strengthening measure. That perilous rocking of our institutions, which attended several stages of its progress, was due, not to the Bill, but to the resistance offered to the Bill. Had the middle classes of this country generally acceded to the possession of power in that spirit of ignorance or class selfishness which treats all that is outside, and especially all that is above, itself, as its natural enemy, the ruin of our institutions must of course have followed the passing of the Act. This middle class, in the then subsisting state of the representation, constituted undoubtedly a great majority as compared with the higher class, who were upon the whole the previous possessors of power. Why did not this majority combine to assert itself against, and to trample down the minority, whom it had displaced, so far as mere numbers were concerned, from the control of the helm of State? I think Mr. Frederic Harrison was the first to point out, in one of our periodicals,* that the great access of power and impetus of movement which the Reform Act gave to the Liberal party was due not so much to the provisions of the Bill themselves as to the energetic mood into which the nation had been elevated by the obstinate and long-

* *F. R, ibid.* p. 449.

continued struggle to secure them. There was also the odium which necessarily attached to the champions of resistance; for their seeming attitude, though not by any means their uniform frame of mind, was that either of a tyrannical selfishness, or of an unmanly superstition. Yet, in spite of all this, and in spite of the splendid services of the administration of Lord Grey in 1833 and 1834, that Government had become, at the close of the second session of the Reformed Parliament, weak in the country, sickly and to all appearance near its end; until the ill-judged assertion of mere prerogative by King William the Fourth, in November of the last-named year, neutralised the natural operation of Parliamentary decay, compelled the nation to stand upon its defence, and conveyed to the Liberal party, by a strong reaction, the access of health and vigorous organisation which took effect in a lengthened course of generous and far-reaching legislation.

25. We then obtained from practical experience a lesson which ought to have been sufficient for all following times. The argument indeed is plausible, and until it had been exploded by a living confutation it was perhaps something more that the admission to the franchise, by a single stroke, of a mass numerically sufficient to overbear the whole previously existing constituency, and thus violently to derange the balance of political forces, could not but be a perilous and rash experiment. But the Reform Act showed that we might securely discard the mere *simulacra* of representation; that the Government, which had been over and for the nation, might safely be of and by the nation; that the newly enfranchised classes had greatly invigorated the action of the system; that they had modified it for good, but that they eschewed the

career of the upstart, and desired, upon the whole, to act in the spirit of the olden time. Years passed on. Education spread. The new commercial legislation, conferring the double boon of a free supply of food and a free vent for the products of industry, paralysed the sinews of Chartism, and won the heart and confidence of the people; which had undoubtedly, by many acts of strangely blind and ungenerous internal government, been forced out of the line of their natural, congenial loyalty and trustfulness into disaffection or suspicion. There came soon a testing day. The Revolutions of 1830 on the continent of Europe had put into uneasy motion a great force of disintegrating elements among ourselves. Thus it was before the Reform Act: but how after it? In 1848 there arrived a new batch of Revolutions, more wide and more searching. It was given out in that year that on the 10th of April issue would be taken between the loyal, peaceful inhabitants of London and the enemies of order. A vast organisation was prepared for defence. But when the day arrived, it appeared that order had no enemies; not one single staff was tried upon one single head, nor one charge even of blank cartridge fired. The people, high and low, were all on one side. The experiment of reform had thus converted repulsion into attraction, *minus* forces into *plus;* and had immensely added to the power of government, and the aggregate disposable forces of the nation, by amalgamating the hearts of men.

26. And yet when, a few years later, it was timidly and with bated breath proposed to repeat a process which had proved so richly beneficial, and to deal with the artisans as we had dealt with the middle class, the old terrors, the old bugbears, were at once put in requisition, and surely with far less apology than before. It was not now a

question of departing from a time-grown and time-honoured system, which had wound itself (so to speak) into the national life, and with respect to which no man, within the six hundred years of our representative history, could point to the period when it had not been. It was not now a question of tempting the unknown: except, indeed, as a man who had broken a horse yesterday tempts the unknown when he begins to break another horse to-day. It was still held either that a people is always politically drunk or mad, or at the least that the gift of the franchise must make them so. Any reference to the manner in which these predictions had been made and falsified in the case of the ten-pound constituency was met by a kind of deification of the middle class, the class in the golden mean of the philosopher; the class that had made and gained the petition "Give me neither poverty nor riches"; the class whose composition was so saturated with virtue and intelligence as to neutralise the poisons that lay hidden in the gift of political enfranchisement. Below them, nothing but an abyss of darkness and drunkenness, with trades unions dimly moving in the midst; which were certain to organise an overwhelming multitude in the name of Labour, for the purpose of establishing a new despotism of the many over the few.

27. Such were the ungainly pleas current in 1866. And these objections, for their appointed time, did their appointed mischief. But, after a year or two of the nation's life had been spent in a conflict that should never have been waged, we went down the "precipice," and landed at the foot. Two Parliaments of very different complexions, merits, and performances have been returned under the influence of the constituency furnished by the household suffrage; both of them have shown, in their respective

ways, an attention to the interests of labour which was greatly needed, and more than amply justified; but neither of them has supplied so much as a shadow of a shade of warrant for the charge, that the working men would combine together, in the interests of their own class, to wage war upon other classes. The marvel is, that they have been either unable or unwilling to combine even to the moderate and reasonable extent which would have sufficed to place half a dozen or a dozen of themselves in the popular chamber, and thereby usefully to enlarge its means of acquaintance with the ideas, wants, and tendencies of the people.

28. Thus we have now had a second trial of the great experiment, with a result substantially identical: a result which demonstrates that the working class, like the middle class, are in the best sense Conservative; that the working class, like the middle class, are lovers, not of equality, but of inequality; that they wish to be enrolled upon the lists of the Constitution, not as men enter a hostile fortress to destroy it, but as they enrol themselves in a corps of volunteers, to strengthen and augment it.

29. It is this great safeguard, the love of inequality, which has made safe the changes past, and which will make safe the changes yet to come; which will augment the quantity of strength available for all our public and national ends, and will not deteriorate its quality. Do not then let it be with us in this matter as it was in the course of the free-trade legislation, when each successive "interest," as it was handled, and as its predictions, always plausible, were met by pointing to the proved futility of similar anticipations in all former cases, protested that there were specialities affecting just that one only calling in particular which would make freedom, beneficial as it had

proved to others, ruinous to it. I believe I have myself listened, *hisce auribus*, to the dirges of at least fifty trades, chanted beforehand on their own coming death, all of which are now not only alive, but more vigorous and more extended by far, than they were before their immolation. This is not altogether creditable. But there is some excuse for men whose very means of livelihood were about to be subjected to a novel manipulation, if the balance of their judgments were for the time disturbed. Surely the statesman sits upon a higher eminence, and ought to obtain a broader view. Now let us see what has happened. First, at the time of the old Reform Act, although the popular constituencies previously existing had not exhibited revolutionary tendencies, it was contended that the middle class would be unsafe depositaries of power. Next, when the middle class had by their moderation and patriotism redeemed themselves from this imputation, and it was proposed in 1866 to admit the artisans of our towns to the franchise, it was held that the middle class had indeed proved to be paragons of political virtue, but the artisan was a perilous creature, and could not be trusted. However, he has been admitted, and with him a class below him in the towns, among whom, if anywhere, the elements of unfitness were to be suspected. The constituencies, in which these classes form a majority, have returned to Parliament a Tory majority, which, except upon one very peculiar occasion, the middle class constituency never gave. Is it now to be held that, though the artisans and labourers of the towns may be trusted, there is an impure influence, a kind of political stench, in the atmosphere beyond the limits of Parliamentary boroughs, which is fatal to intellectual and moral health, and that the county

householder will destroy the Constitution which the town householder has so vigorously upheld?

30. There was certainly a time when it might have been urged with plausibility, if not with reason, that the rural voter had not the independence which is an essential condition for the beneficial exercise of the franchise. When the traditions of the old Poor Law had not yet been effaced; when, under the law of settlement, the peasant was virtually all but an *astrictus glebæ;* when highly skilled labour had not had its new impulse and development from agricultural improvements and the introduction of machinery; when there was a press for the palace, the mansion, and even the counting-house, but none for the farm, for the shop, or for the cottage; when the school was a rare experiment, instead of an invariable feature of every parish and locality, on a scale measured with something like precision by the wants of the population; when the rate of wages in very many counties did not suffice for health or decency, to say nothing of comfort, rest, or recreation; then the argument had a weight which it has now wholly lost, even independently of the glaring fact, that our rural householders grow steadily from year to year less rural, and include from year to year a larger fraction of population essentially urban.

31. Mr. Lowe is, however, together with many more, apprehensive that the admission of the peasantry to the vote will strengthen the Conservative party. If this be so, I am sorry; but I cannot help it. I cannot hold that self-government is for Liberals, and political nonentity for Tories. If the rural voters lean too much to the Tory party, their admission to a share in the self-government of the nation will be the very thing most likely to correct what is undue in that leaning. Were they indeed to be

subject to intimidation, were they liable to the substitution by an extraneous agency of another man's judgment for their own, the case would be different; but if, out of their respect for the clergyman, the landlord, and the farmer, the peasant chooses to take the advice of any of the three in the disposal of his vote, the principles of Liberalism bind me to respect that respect. I must take my chance. But the chance is not all one way. We, the Liberals, are apt to say that the influence of money, working through the public-house, is a considerable element in the strength of urban Toryism: it is less likely so to operate among the more dispersed constituencies of the country. The longer the Tory party withhold the franchise *de facto*, whatever be the grounds, the more the Liberals will be regarded as the givers of it, even though it be given like the Relief Acts of 1828 and 1829, and the Franchise Act of 1867, through the Tories. A graver question is behind. In the rural controversy between capital and labour, even apart from one gross and unforgotten offence in a higher rank, the parochial clergy have not always been able to abstain from partisanship, and, where they have been partisans, it has commonly not been on the side of labour. Notwithstanding their general and exemplary devotion to parochial duty, this has tended to stimulate a feeling in favour of the disestablishment of the Church. Of this sentiment I cannot measure the breadth or depth; but it may be found to form a real ingredient in the general question. It has been further stimulated by one incidental circumstance, far from unimportant. The agricultural labourers, in managing their case as to wages, have required the aid of speakers, who are rather harshly named agitators; and the speakers among them are commonly those who,

through the conduct of religious exercises, are placed more or less in alliance with Nonconformity. I need hardly add, that Nonconformity, which still supplies, to so great an extent, the backbone of British Liberalism, is now largely intent on effecting disestablishment.

32. But it is only a small part of the opponents of the extension with whom the supposed want of independence is a favourite or a congenial argument. It is the latent, creeping, phantasmal horror, the "vague spiritual fear" of numerical preponderance in the foreground, universal suffrage in the distance, which disposes many men under all sorts of pretences, and Mr. Lowe with a frankness of avowal that does him honour, to deny household suffrage to one half the working population of the land after the other half, no whit better qualified, have shown that they can use it innocently and well. This fear of numbers is with some an idiosyncratic habit: with others it is no better, after all the living and working experience we have had, than an ungenerous and unmanly fear. The supposed dangers of a numerical preponderance are set aside by the fact, that the class which possesses the preponderance does not act for itself but for the country The supposed danger of inferior information and capacity, in the masses not enjoying the advantage of leisure, is completely neutralised by their general disposition to turn to account the precepts and example of those whom they believe to be better informed. We have in this country a Monarchy and an aristocracy: and we have them, because the country likes to have them; and likes to have them, not by a fitful passing humour, but by the abiding influences of its traditions, its feelings, and its convictions. If these things be true, we may go forward fearlessly; if they be false, we ought, without loss of time, to go a

great way back. In neither case is it well that we should stand where we are.

33. And indeed the arguments which command or deserve most respect in this opposition are those of the very few who found their objection to a public enlargement of the suffrage on a supposed failure in what has already been done. It is at any rate a high and chivalrous line of argument, in part adopted by Mr. Lowe, which insists upon the claims of Politics as the grand architectonic* art, claims them as the proper dominion of the most elevated and accomplished minds, and boldly avers that, from the day when the common clay of which artisans are made came to enter so largely into the composition of the town constituencies, the former level of Parliamentary doctrine and practice has declined. Economy, it is said, is at a discount; the meddlesome intrusion of Government into matters formerly left to local and individual energies is in vogue; a benumbing centralisation creeps upon us; demagoguism, in the form of subservience to the interests of class, with the avoidance of unpopular reforms, is, as Mr. Lowe and I agree in thinking, largely practised. Mixed questions are taken hold of by their popular end; and the unpopular but wholesome part is left to stand over *sine die*.

34. Thus has been handled the great subject of local government; the Administration has been in office for four sessions, and has not lifted a hand, except to give away, in successive doses of public money administered to the ratepayers, the powerful leverage by which they might have propelled the movement of a great and truly Constitutional reform. Mr. Lowe and I are here at one. Indeed, no one perhaps has been less in sympathy than myself

* Aristot. *Eth. Nicom.* i. 2.

with the action of the present Parliament. But we must try to consider the years since 1868 as a whole, and to give them fair play. So considering them, I say that the faults, of omission and of commission, are almost wholly faults for which household suffrage is not responsible, and that it has exhibited a virtue which entirely outweighs, and casts into the shade, the small contribution it may have made, through the subserviency to appetite of a sprinkling of town voters, to the debit side of the account. This great merit is, a quicker sympathy with labour. Until the household suffrage had been given, labour had not received anything like full justice in regard to either of the two important subjects of combinations and contracts.

35. It is pleasant to argue, as I have thus far argued, the optimising side of the question. I go all lengths in opposing those who ascribe to the extension of the suffrage the existing and in some respects growing evils of our Parliamentary system. I am one of those who think them very great; and I proceed so far as to admit that no extension of the suffrage, wise and right as it may be, will cure them. The longer I live, the less do I see, in the public institutions of any country, even a tendency to approximate to an ideal standard. Turning to our own, amidst all our vaunted and all our real improvements, I perceive in some very important respects a sad tendency to decline. It seems to me that, as a whole, our level of public principle and public action was at its zenith in the twenty years or thereabouts which succeeded the Reform Act of 1832, and that it has since perceptibly gone down. I agree with Mr. Lowe that we are in danger of engendering both a gerontocracy and a ploutocracy.* He asks

* *F. R. ibid.* p. 493.

whether any one is bold enough to allege that household suffrage has improved the House of Commons. I have already pointed out the essential point in which it has. But, under the mixed conditions of human life, it often happens that what is improving in one point of view may at the very same time be decaying or declining in another. The gradual movement in favour of gerontocracy and ploutocracy did not begin with household suffrage, nor am I aware that their advance has been accelerated by it.

36. The influences which determine both the moral and the intellectual standard of a legislature are very mixed and very diverse. Montesquieu, I think, says, that in the infancy of nations the man forms the State; in their maturity, the State forms the man. But I form a very high estimate of the power still possessed by individuals, even in a State so old as ours. I am not sufficiently detached and impartial to discuss this portion of the subject. I turn to another side of it—to the qualifications which attract the favour of a constituency.

37. These, too, are very various; birth, station, talent, character, former service, landed possessions, commercial and manufacturing connection, and lastly, money. The two circumstances which strike me most forcibly, and most painfully, are, first, the rapid and constant advance of the money power; secondly, the reduction, almost to zero, of the chances of entrance into Parliament for men who have nothing to rely upon but their talent and their character; nothing, that is to say, but the two qualities, which certainly stand before all others in the capacity of rendering service to the country. These, again, are chiefly the young; for such men have usually, by the time they reach middle life, attained, without great difficulty, to wealth or to competence. But they have

then passed the proper period for beginning an effective Parliamentary education. There have been honourable and distinguished exceptions; but, as a rule, it would be as rational to begin training for the ballet at forty-five or fifty, as for the real, testing work of the Cabinet. That union of suppleness and strength which is absolutely requisite for the higher labours of the administrator and the statesman is a gift the development of which, unless it be commenced betimes, nature soon places beyond reach. There is indeed scope and function in Parliament for the middle-aged man, and even for men like myself, no longer middle-aged; but nothing can compensate for a falling off in the stock of the young men whom we need for the coming time; and we need the choicest in the country. The only education for the highest work in the House of Commons is, as a rule, that given in the House of Commons. Happily, we have still a supply, in cases where high birth and family influence can be brought to bear. But we cannot afford the confinement of the admission to these cases: first, because they are not enough; secondly, because our being confined to that class for the statesmen of the future is a limitation highly adverse to the free action of popular principles, and tending to add enormously to the weight cast into the other scale. If I must hold the language of party, I say it is the Liberal party that is the great sufferer by the exclusion of this class; for its members have had a large, if not the largest, share in the promotion of Liberal measures.

38. Their place has been taken mainly by men who have been recommended to their constituents by the possession of money. The numbers of those who sit in virtue of the other qualifications that have been enumerated, are

probably much as they were. There has been one case only of great gain, and one of great loss. The loss has been among those who had the very best capacity to serve the country. The gain has accrued to those whose main object is to serve themselves. I do not mean in a corrupt sense. It is to serve themselves by social advancement. The total exclusion of such men is probably not to be desired; but their swollen and swelling numbers are a national calamity. It is a calamity with a double edge. For what becomes of the excluded? Where do they now obtain their education? They are mainly driven to the Press. The services of the Press to the community, and most of all to public men, are invaluable; but the value of the education it affords to the young is a very different question. It gives them a laborious training in irresponsible, anonymous, and pungent criticism, in lieu of the manly and noble discipline which a youth spent in Parliament imparts. In the light of day, under the eye and judgment of the best, at once stimulated and restrained, at once encouraged and abashed, our youth had everything to sustain a high sense of political warfare, to develop the better parts of a knightly nature, and to rebuke the sordid and the base. Invert all these expressions, and we obtain a tolerably accurate description of the kind of education which our modern arrangements have provided for the most ready, brilliant, and serviceable of the young men of England, in lieu of a seat in Parliament. These are not pleasant things to say; but it is perhaps time they should be said.

39. One great cause of the mischief doubtless is the expensiveness of elections. It is nothing less than astonishing to find our countrymen so little awake not only to the serious amount of this mischief, but to its scandalous and

debasing character; this is ploutocracy indeed, in the most deformed of all its shapes, and with the ugliest of all its faces. Wisdom and virtue! cries Mr. Burke. Pounds, shillings, and pence! answer the low practice and opinion of England. We think, or act as if we thought, that as the thews and sinews of a soldier in some armies may be replaced by a certain sum of money, *plus* other thews and sinews, so intellectual and moral force may fairly enough be turned out of doors, provided a certain amount of money, perhaps without any thews and sinews at all, be forthcoming in its place.

40. Under the system of the unreformed Parliament, it is true that particular elections occasionally cost enormous sums; even sums that are now never heard of. But such elections were exceedingly rare. And that old system, which made no vaunt of being popular, was as a whole far more favourable to poor, but capable and cultivated men, than is our present seemingly democratic legislation, A great reform in this respect ought to be an article of the Liberal creed. If no such reform is achieved, the mere extension of the suffrage will augment this particular evil, and a portion of the good it should effect will thus be neutralised. There are two obstacles: one is a general deadness of opinion respecting the mischief; the other is Tory opposition to its removal. As to the first, let one instance suffice. In a new university seat, on a recent vacancy, the indispensable condition for becoming a candidate was to produce the sum of four thousand pounds. The seat might almost as well have been sold, like Mr. Ward Beecher's pews in Brooklyn or New York, by public auction. What must be the general level of opinion in a country on the point, when this can happen in one of the constituencies thought to be most

enlightened? But there is also another singular feature in the case. The party which opposes the extension of the franchise, and urges, among other reasons of resistance, the increase of expense it will cause, is the very same party which resists, and will resist, every serious attempt to cheapen elections. Two new articles, pretty closely associated together, have lately been added to the Tory creed, not by a general council, but by silent consent: faith in the long purse, and faith in what Mr. Bright, by one of his many happy phrases, dubbed the *residuum*.

41. Mr. Lowe and I supply two conspicuous instances of disinterested choice on the part of our respective constituencies; choice which, whether right or wrong, has been made on purely public grounds. What we want, and want still more than the cheapening of elections, is that every constituency, that each party in every constituency shall choose its candidate upon purely public grounds. In the town constituencies, of which alone I am now about to speak, this is not so. We should not then have had a man of the eminence and value of Lord Selborne, after he had sat for a single Parliament, excluded long, and excluded hopelessly, had it not been for an exercise of nominating influence and a disposition in the particular borough to conform to it, which constituted an accident as rare as it was happy. We should not have had the distinguished Solicitor-General of a Government having so much favour with the constituencies as the present Government once had, waiting through more than one session for a seat. We should not have had, as we have at this moment, many men of tried capacity and distinguished public service, and many other men of high and proved promise, waiting in vain outside the doors.

We should not have had that decline in the average quality of the *personnel* of the Representative House, which has, I fear, unquestionably taken place since the first Parliament that met under the Reform Act.

42. On this subject I frankly own that I do not understand Mr. Lowe. I should have anticipated from him a keen anxiety that local claims should not prevail against public motives in the choice of candidates: that all candidates should be chosen as he has himself been chosen. But he tells us of that "excellent principle in English elections," the principle of "seeking our electing bodies" in "organisations which are in the habit of acting together for other than electoral purposes." Why is this so excellent a principle? It would seem odd on general grounds to say that, when you have a function of the very highest importance to be discharged, you should entrust the discharge of it, not to bodies chosen and put together for their fitness to discharge it, but to bodies chosen, and presumably fitted, to do something else. It seems like saying this: electoral powers shall be given to non-electoral fitness. I can see, indeed, a set of reasons for lauding this principle; but they are reasons turned upside down. This plan, standing as it now stands, almost without modification, has been found to offer the strongest obstacles to extension of the franchise. It raises the self-consciousness, the localism, the egotism of each constituency to its maximum. It creates for bodies, what we denounce and destroy in individuals, a vested interest in representation. It is the public-house monopoly over again, carried into the world of politics. It lays the ground for the new-fashioned bribery of our day, the bribery of constituencies, of such a portion of them, that is to say, as will turn the scale in the lump: by local public works, by building specula-

tions, by roads and other town improvements which "our respective representative" has effected or announced. These, I am sure, are not Mr. Lowe's reasons for the eulogy he has pronounced: but they are, I fear, the reasons of many. Will he forgive me if I make bold to say that I think his reason is a superstition? A method which once was unavoidable, and was then not only unavoidable but admirable, he lauds after the reasons for it have ceased to exist, and when new reasons for modifying and relaxing it have come into force. I admit that Mr. Burke commended it; and very loth am I, except in some vital matters of the French Revolution, to dissent from that great authority. But, since the time of Mr. Burke, old dangers have disappeared, new dangers have come into view, new evils into almost a virulent activity; the adjustment of political and social forces has been entirely remodelled. This *dictum* lands me for a moment upon the field of history.

43. During the first twenty years of the reign of George the Third, the public liberties had not yet been solidly and finally consolidated. Ireland was still held as a conquered country. Scotland was entirely without popular representation. I take this opportunity of recording my gratitude for the invaluable public services of a man whom, except as to his public services, I do not wish to mention. The name of Wilkes deserves distinction in our sphere; it deserves to be enrolled upon the list of the great champions of our freedom.

44. The original virtue and end of our borough-system were, in making provision for the wants of the State, to establish public liberty against the aristocracy and the Crown. The self-consciousness and the local traditions of each constituency had then no tendency to draw it away from the

straightest public aims. They were all engaged, with one mind, in one purpose; and in nothing else. In a standing internal effort of this kind, the burgesses derived an immense addition of strength from the fact that they represented not only a certain number of individuals —the individual was then comparatively nobody and nothing—but recognised historical bodies.

45. Since the Reform Act, if not before it, this great controversy has been at an end. The public liberties are absolutely in the hands of the constituencies. It is not from the Crown, nor even from the aristocracy, that they have anything to fear; but it is upon less conspicuous issues, from subtler and from meaner influences outside them, and from what is within them; from sluggishness as to public affairs, from the wealth-worship which marks and deforms our time, from the disposition to regard too much the local and sectional interests or considerations, too little those which are of the nation only. To find the best man, that is their duty; to define the word, that is their difficulty, a difficulty they have not yet surmounted.

46. I think I have now shown why we should pause before giving an unqualified adhesion to Mr. Lowe's panegyric on his "excellent principle." My words may be taken as a partial exhibition of what is to be said against it. They might lead to injustice if I were supposed to mean that nothing can be said in their favour. The words will be as unpalatable as the roll in Jeremiah, that was read by Baruch the scribe, and which, because it shocked the ears of the king, Jehudi cut up with a penknife, and cast it into the fire that was upon the hearth.* But there is little fear of their leading to injustice. Such is the

* Jeremiah xxxvi.

supererogatory strength embedded in the present arrangement of constituencies, that they can not only uphold themselves, but they can also, not in round argument, but in fact, deny, at least for a time, the franchise to those who ought to, but do not, possess it. "Rag tag and bobtail," disguised and got up with makeshift arms, hovering in the distance, have before now decided battles. So in the battle of the franchise there hovers on the flanks an awful phantom. It is yclept "redistribution of seats." This hobgoblin decided the battle, and slew the Ministry of 1866. It may decide more battles, and slay more Ministries. Its name acts with a subtle and magic power on the inner consciousness, not the outer one, of the "member" for our city or borough. When the enfranchising arguments, long floating dimly before him, begin a little to warm his blood, or if not that, yet to make him feel uncomfortable; all this is in the outer consciousness alone. But when the black banner waves in his eye, on which are written the spectral letters "redistribution of seats," they operate as drastically as if they were *mene mene tekel upharsin*, they go straight to the seat of life, to the very heart and mind, not indeed of the man, but of the "member."

47. Let me not then be too sanguine, and let Mr. Lowe abate his alarms. His "excellent principle," especially when mounted on such a charger as himself, will yet do service in the field. It is a veteran that has stood, and will stand, much battering. It may be long before the country is able to reckon with it, and the reckoning, when it does come, will be but mild. Do not then let it exasperate the nation, by an obstinate withholding of the county franchise from that moiety of our householders which is not the least qualified to use it innocently and

well. This in the meantime, with good measure for the cheapening of elections, will be a great and signal boon. And we shall lie at the foot of the "precipice," as we now stand at the top, in perfect comfort. And our Constitution, so often destroyed by rash and profane hands, with its nine, or ninety times nine, cat-like lives, will still be, for the Mr. Lowe of that day, the Constitution "which has been the admiration of the world for five hundred years." Much, when all these matters are settled, will have been done to invigorate the institutions of the land, to strengthen the national cohesion, to increase the sum total of the public energies, to establish confidence between class and class, to train the people for the habitual, hereditary discharge of public duty. But I am sorry that my harp, like the harp "in Tara's hall," must yet, amidst all this prospective joy, be again "tuned to notes of sadness." We shall not have landed in Utopia. Some new leaks will open where more old ones have been stopped. That ancient trio, the world, the flesh, and the devil, will be too strong for even an approach to the abstract standard of a Polity. The public, a fine animal, is strong but sleepy. When he gets active, he gets tired; they tell him he has been excited, and it has been bad for his health; he lays his head upon his pillow; but the interests, ever so anxious lest he should hurt himself by over-exertion, ever wakeful, ever nimble, ever "redeeming the time," that is to say, selling it in the best market —they set to while he is asleep, and make a night of it. There will always be scandals to make us humble, and faults and wants crying aloud to make us diligent; but political progress, if intermittent and qualified, has on the whole been practical and real, and such, in this land of ours, may it ever be.

VI.

LAST WORDS ON THE COUNTY FRANCHISE.*

1. To close a scene from what is called "Parliament out of session," or at least my own part in that scene, I will now endeavour to sum up the case on the extension of household suffrage to the Counties, as it stands between Mr. Lowe and myself. My arguments have been as follows.

(1.) That the question is again in danger of being played with, for the mere purposes of party, like the same question for the Boroughs in the session of 1867. I placed this argument in the foreground of my appeal to Mr. Lowe, with a hope grounded on the proverb that the burnt child dreads the fire.

(2.) That the mere presumptions against organic change, which were strong until the epoch of the first Reform Act, had then become comparatively weak; and that the acts of 1867 and 1869, which enfranchised the householders in the towns, had created an opposite presumption in favour of the householders in the counties, unless a valid plea in bar could be set up.

(3.) No such plea can be found in the natural distinction between town and county; now that so many of our "Knights of the shire" represent constituencies essentially urban, and that so many of our "Burgesses" do in fact sit

* Reprinted from *The Nineteenth Century*, January 1878.

for little counties, in which the town suffrage has been given to populations completely or principally rural. The present distribution of the vote, then, is capricious; and a capricious law cannot command respect or permanence.

(4.) No such bar can be found in comparative want of qualification; either as to absence of substantial interest or as to selfishness, or as to passion. Every class admitted to the franchise improves, in some new respect, the competency of Parliament. The argument in favour of capacity merely intellectual as an exclusive title, urged as it is now urged, logically and really means absolute government; and, among our countrymen, any lack in this respect is amply made up by the trust and deference towards others of the classes less informed, or less endowed with leisure.

(5.) Passing episodically to a broader ground, my paper argues, that there are some positive reasons for the enfranchisement of persons who contribute to the revenue and to the national wealth; give, through the family, pledges to society; and may also do it serious mischiefs. These persons, as I argue, will be more useful, and less harmful, when associated with its interests, and trained in their degree to its political as well as its local affairs.

(6.) Inequality in the voters, taken in the abstract, might require inequality in the vote. If we admit that this inequality is in part (and in part only) measured by property and station, a scale to determine it would be both odious and impracticable; and it is attained to some extent, without objection, both by the direct and by the indirect influence which attaches to possessions.

(7.) To the merely numerical argument, that the rich and educated minority are to be given over to a majority of daily labourers, I reply that it proves too much and too

little. Too much; for it would make all our enfranchisements wrong, since each class admitted, in the downward series, has outnumbered the aggregate of classes above it. Too little; for all these enfranchisements have done good, so that the mere argument of number need not raise the presumption of harm to follow.

(8.) The love of political equality may be dangerous; but as distinct from the love of liberty, it does not prevail in this country.

(9.) The experience of 1848, amidst the shock of European revolutions, showed that the reform of Parliament had immensely strengthened the foundations of our social order.

(10.) The experience of 1869–77 has shown that the large admission of labour as an element of the constituencies has given us Parliaments more alive to its just interests, but in no respect disposed to trespass on the rights of the non-labouring classes.

(11.) The independence of the county householder is safe as against intimidation; and we have no reason to suppose he will not duly use for himself the faculty of self-government.

2. From these arguments I passed on to collateral topics, in which I am very much at one with Mr. Lowe; and which, therefore, need not here be further noticed. Let me then consider his Reply.

And first I must point out that those who form their idea of my argument from his pages will form an incorrect and misleading idea of it. He states at the outset, and repeatedly,* that I have urged the expediency of creating equal electoral districts. They are once named incident-

* *Fortnightly Review*, pp. 733, 735, 742.

ally, but only as enhancing in the minds of many the horrors of "anything like universal suffrage," and are then forthwith excluded from the argument;* which contemplates, as we all do, a redistribution of seats, and says as to this:† "The reckoning, when it does come, will be but mild."

When, passing from a series of narrower and more special to wider arguments, I "suspend for a moment"‡ that series, the Answer says "he asks leave to withdraw"§ his conclusion, and, "he threw up the attempt."

When I say there are "some reasons" in favour of enfranchising certain persons,‖ this he converts into the proposition that they are "entitled to a vote." ¶

When I point out certain "conditions previous," namely contribution to revenue, contribution to national wealth, the pledges of the "house-father" as such, the mischiefs that the bad citizen may do,** the Reply sets forth †† that these are my only arguments, "the four Corinthian pillars which are destined to support the enormous fabric of universal suffrage." This, it is added, "will hardly be believed." I go farther. I trust it will not be believed at all. For example, the very same paragraph contains an argument perfectly distinct, to which the previous arguments are introductory. It argues "that all those who live in a country should take an interest in that country, should love that country;" and that the vote gives that sense of interest, and fosters that love. Mr. Lowe may say, if he likes, that this is a bad argument; but to deny its existence is hardly consistent either

* *Sup.* p. 142.
† *Sup.* p. 169.
‡ *Sup.* p. 142.
§ *F. R.* pp. 737, 742.
‖ *Sup.* p. 143.
¶ *F. R.* p. 742.
** *Sup.* p. 143.
†† *F. R.* p. 738.

with the logic for which he is famous, or with the care which so grave a subject demands.

Having given these instances by way of *caveat*, and having shown how he has separated the four Corinthian pillars from their fellows, I will now inquire with what measure of notice he thinks these pillars themselves severally deserve to be handled.

3. The man, I have urged, is "a contributor to the public revenue." To this it is answered: "The same thing may be said of every dog"; and "a man satisfies the qualification by paying for a glass of beer." Now, when the plea on my side is that adult men generally are habitual and large contributors to revenue, it is no answer to urge that a particular person may contribute but slightly and casually. Still less is it an answer, in law or fact, to say that a dog contributes to revenue. In law, a man who chooses to keep a dog pays for leave to keep him. In fact, I had thought Mr. Lowe's own Parliamentary experience of the dog-tax had conclusively taught him that, while the barking was certainly considerable, they were men, and not dogs, who paid the impost.

4. The man, I have again urged, contributes by his labour (as distinct from capital) to the public wealth. The Reply says, that so does the cart-horse. Now suppose a labourer is digging in my garden, and a friend says to me, "No doubt you pay him wages." I do not answer, "Why should I? Would you pay wages to the spade?" The spade, like the cart-horse, contributes to the result; but neither the spade nor the cart-horse has, as the man has because he is a man, the first elements of capacity to give a vote.

5. The man, I have pleaded, "has given pledges to society by constituting himself the head of a family, in

which is lodged a large part of his affections." The answer is: "This is the condition of the continuance of the species, which we share with the lower animals." Here, I must own, is opened to me a new chapter in natural history. I was not aware that the lower animals did constitute families as man does, or that the sires of horses and dogs, for example, did, as man does, invest affections, which are a large and real portion of ourselves, in the being and welfare of their offspring. I use advisedly the term "invest," and commend it to the consideration of those who may be tempted to think that the affections are after all no more than "sentiment," that the human heart is but a shadow, and that property is the only thing which has reality and solidity enough about it for an investment.

6. Every man, I likewise observed, has great powers of mischief. So, says the Reply, "has almost every animal." It is most true. Therefore, so far as animal nature gives us the opportunity, we endeavour to neutralise these powers of mischief, and to convert them into instruments of good, by domestication; a process which is not in its nature penal, but which turns mainly on improved treatment, and gives increased happiness of life. It is my opponent who has established this analogy, in succinct and almost contemptuous terms; but, so far as it subsists at all, it teaches that powers of mischief in mixed natures are best met, not by blind undistinguishing force, not by resistance without remedy, but by developing the faculties, and enlarging to their utmost scope the opportunities for good, of the creature to whom they belong.

7. We are told,* "it is well settled" that no one is per-

* *F. R.* p. 739.

mitted to say "anything against the poor." If so, it is at least equally well settled that, without any permission, they may be censured and condemned *ad libitum;* and the Reply itself is the proof. The "virtues, capacities, and talents" imputed to them are "imaginary."* Their desires are stronger as their needs are greater, and as the stake which they risk by change is smaller.† They are more likely to seek to create by law a property for themselves than to respect the property of others.‡ They will require their wages to be maintained by law, the articles they consume to be relieved from taxation, the articles they produce to be covered against competition.§ The very qualities which the opponents of liberty might fairly be expected to regard with some favour, are treated with ridicule or vituperation. I had pointed out their notorious tendency to defer to classes and persons superior in station, and favoured with leisure. How absurd, intimates the Reply, that they should confide in those against whom they are to protect themselves! ‖ I had pointed out that the English people are lovers, not of equality, but of inequality. But this, instead of appeasing, exasperates. It seems that I,

> "like many another babbler, hurt
> Whom I would soothe, and harmed where I would heal." ¶

Yet surely the points are worthy of some consideration by the impartial inquirer, by the honest and ingenuous alarmist, by every man except those whose mental vision enables them to concentrate light, as a burning-glass concentrates heat, and to flash it with a vividness almost

* *F. R.* p. 745.
† *Ibid.* p. 736.
‡ *Ibid.* p. 739.
§ *Ibid.* p. 745.
‖ *Ibid.* p. 736.
¶ Tennyson, 'Guinevere.'

preternatural upon some one nick or corner of a subject, but condemns them to see that subject in and at the nick or corner only, and never in its full and natural scope. On those, to whom we defer, we are undoubtedly less disposed to trespass. If among beings variously endowed, gifted with freedom of the will, and fitted for progress, we find social inequality to be deemed by our countrymen a sound and normal arrangement, that is surely in the nature *pro tanto* of a security against the levelling, if not plundering, tendencies which it is Mr. Lowe's calamity to believe ingrained in the English people.

8. If, in a case like this, what may be termed conciliatory arguments fail to obtain the smallest grain of acknowledgment, so it is the doom of facts to remain hopelessly invisible. To me it seemed a plea not without its place in the general argument, that the popular judgment was often more just than that of the higher orders. The Reply says:* "We should like to have had an instance, but none is given." To enumerate the instances in full would be beyond the compass of an article which aims at bringing the question to a point; or, indeed, of any article. It might be enough to say the "instances" make up nearly the whole history of the country since the peace of 1815. If this be too vague, I will give some heads, most of which include large groups of instances. 1. The Abolition of Slavery. 2. The Reform of Parliament. 3. The Abolition of the Corn Laws, of the Navigation Laws, of some twelve hundred Duties of Customs and Excise. 4. The Abolition of the Sacramental and other Religious Tests. 5. The Reform of the shameful Criminal Code, which too long dishonoured the

* *F. R.* p. 738.

country. 6. The Reform of our unjust and unequal Laws of Combination and of Contract. 7. The direction of our Foreign Policy in a sense favourable to the aspirations of freedom and not to the tactics of the Holy Alliance. 8. I will add another and a very testing question, drawn from another sphere. We have all had before us the life and character of the Prince Consort. On what social levels was he most justly judged and most highly estimated? Was it in the *salons*, or was it by the nation? In this list I avoid burning questions of to-day, or I might lodge an appeal to Mr. Lowe individually on the matter of Education, and on the great controversy of the East. But, in sum, it would be difficult to name a subject of the first magnitude which might not be specified in the list, unless perhaps that of Roman Catholic emancipation. Without any other exception, the popular judgment on these broad issues has been more nearly just and true, has gone more to the root of the matter, than that of the higher orders. The question is not whether this confession is one agreeable to make, but whether it is true. Sometimes, indeed, as in the case of the Ecclesiastical Titles Act, high and low, rich and poor, may have gone wrong together.

9. But I may fairly retort the question which has been put, and ask the adversary to furnish his list of great and engrossing subjects, in which the higher orders have, during the last half-century, been mainly right, and the people wrong. Nor let him, with Protean elasticity, turn on me and say, "Aha! there it is: you evidently mean that mere numbers, as they have judged more justly, should have all the power." I mean no such thing. The nation has drawn a great, perhaps the greatest, part of its lights from the minority placed above; but has drawn them from a minority of that minority. Look back upon that

dark time of our domestic history, which followed the peace of 1815. As it is in the higher order that the very highest forms of personal character are exhibited, so in the political sphere there were never wanting those who taught, amidst surrounding antipathies, the lessons of liberty and of wisdom. Moreover, I should be the first to assert that, while the main propelling force has come from beneath, such a force cannot in questions of reconstruction be self-directing, and that there has remained for the leisured classes the performance of a service in shaping, guiding, modifying the great currents of conviction, sympathy, and will which has been secondary but yet invaluable.

10. We should remember that our religion itself did not take its earlier root, or find its primitive home, in the minds of kings, philosophers, and statesmen. Not many rich, not many noble were called. The wisdom and the culture were mostly plotting against our Lord, while the common people heard Him gladly. But the regenerating forces of the Gospel made their way from the base to the summit of society; and the highest thought and intellect of man, won with time to the noble service, hired as it were at the sixth, ninth, and eleventh hour, wrought hard and with effect to develop, defend, and consolidate the truth. Paradox it may seem to be, but fact it is, that the immense advantages which leisure and learning have conferred are largely neutralised, and in some cases utterly outweighed, by the blinding influences of a subtler, deeper, and more comprehensive selfishness:—

"E poi l'affetto l'intel'etto lega." *

11. The Reply, in one of its most dashing portions, observes † that I give reasons for the enfranchisement of the

* Dante, 'Paradiso,' xiii, 117.

† *F. R.* pp. 736-7.

peasant, which only touch him so far as he forms part of the *genus homo*. This is as true with respect to some of the reasons which I have given as it is untrue with respect to others. I do believe, and have very long ago publicly professed a belief, in that matter, which I desire to make at least intelligible, perhaps in some cases even acceptable, to others. That those who contribute to the purposes of a society should share its powers, is almost an axiom in the foundation of a voluntary institution. What I hold as to the larger combination of men in political society is, not that it is an axiom, but that there is a certain amount of presumption in its favour. Such a presumption may be liable to be set aside by counter-pleas, as in the cases of women, minors, paupers, criminals, and so forth; but it exists, and it supplies not the case, but the inception of the case, for enfranchisement. Nor does this presumption of policy merely embrace what is due from the society to the individual; it contemplates quite as much what the individual can supply to the society in point of vigour and cohesion. It surely seems difficult to deny that vigour and cohesion will be greater, where all the parts can be thoroughly welded into the working machinery, than where a proportion, and a large proportion, of them, remaining outside it, are borne along by it as so much dead weight. Augmentation of vital power in the State is what every wise and good citizen should desire. The more closely, and the more largely, the power of human will, affections, and understanding can be placed in association with the mainsprings of the State, the greater will be that augmentation. Enfranchisement tends to attain this end; therefore enfranchisement is presumably to be desired.

12. But presumption is not proof, and it may be overpowered by evidence and counter-argument. What sort of evidence, and what sort of argument, does the Reply adduce? It makes no appeal to British experience; it does not attempt to show that, in so much as a single instance, the constituencies based upon household suffrage have made one solitary attempt at aggression on that minority, composed of the educated and the wealthy, for whose perilous condition it is so full of alarm and of compassion. It alleges the risks we run from the old and the rich, the danger of a gerontocracy and a ploutocracy; whereas, to make its argument good, it should have shown the imminence of a ptochocracy. Whatever the poor might be accused of meaning, surely the old will not legislate in the direction of temerity, nor the rich send forth the mandate of their own spoliation. It waives, indeed, the argument of the "precipice"; and this is so far a gain. But alack! the old hobgoblins, instead of being consigned to ignominious oblivion, are dressed out in new costumes, drawn from that inexhaustible store of glittering and imposing "properties" which every theatre where political pieces are in use can supply. My presumptive and preliminary pleas have been supported by appeals to our experience since 1832 and since 1867: by the character and ideas of the English people, which do not menace our institutions, but are in close and willing harmony with them; by showing that it is caprice, and not principle, which gives to one peasant what it withholds from another, and withholds from one artisan what it gives to another. I must add that all this huckstering and haggling upon what the hagglers and hucksterers themselves know is certain to be done, though it may teach the enfranchised to value enfran-

chisement more highly because they will have to struggle for it, yet must also tend to diminish confidence in the governing classes, if not to induce new misgivings as to their good faith.

13. So far I have dwelt in the main on the mode in which the arguments for the extension are dealt with by the Reply. I now search for the substantive reasons which it advances* in bar of the inevitable concession. Only let me first observe that if it is not only inevitable, but known to be inevitable—and the Reply gives no sign of being without this knowledge—I should have thought it to be eminently for the interest of those, who may share its views, to grant what they have got to grant with as much grace as possible, rather than to bless only under visible compulsion, and with the wry mouth and angry tones of cursing.

14. The "reasons," then, are these. There is no "intolerable evil" now felt, compelling us to change. Again, the new electors may, if united, throw the old into a hopeless minority; and they may readily so unite, because they are homogeneous. This change is not even sought by them: it is thrust into their hands. No instance can be shown of a country which is flourishing, happy, and contented, where the vote is given to adult males generally. And though the anticipations of danger, in which the Reply indulges, may be "extreme cases," yet it claims to "have a perfect right to make every supposition consistent with possibility." Let us go briefly through these pleas in their order.

15. And, beginning in a generous mood, I admit that the "existing state of things" does not for the community at

* *F. R.* pp. 743-6.

large, perhaps not for those immediately concerned, constitute what is commonly called an intolerable evil. But surely it is the wisdom of States to redress their evils before they become intolerable, and their folly to wait for that ripeness of calamity, *cum nec mala ipsa nec eorum remedia ferre possumus*. It was not the sense of intolerable evil that carried the first Reform Act; but the "sentimental" idea, as the Reply would call it, that an extreme of capricious anomaly was bad, that capable men were excluded from the franchise, and that their admission would strengthen and consolidate the State. Our taxation was not intolerable, when Mr. Lowe himself so largely reduced it; nor our system of popular education, when he vitally modified and profoundly invigorated it, by shifting its central principle from prescriptions to results.

16. But the new electors would be so numerous as to throw the old into a "hopeless minority." I had pointed out that the very same objection had applied to all our enfranchisements. Every great enlargement downwards has brought in a number exceeding that of the former possessors of political power. True, says the Reply; but why exaggerate this "natural defect of representative government"?* Here is as pure a *petitio principii* as the annals of *illogic* (to coin the word for the occasion) can supply. If the admission of these new-fledged majorities dislocates or saps the fabric of the Constitution, then indeed their numerical force is the "natural defect of representative government." But experience, to which the Reply here and there just purports to offer a lip-service that in heart it withdraws, has shown us that

* *F. R.* p. 739.

these admissions have not dislocated or sapped the State, but have also greatly consolidated what they had first greatly enlarged. "Broadening downward" the walls, they have made the structure harder to overthrow. This "natural defect" has up to the present time been found no defect at all, but a source of strength and peace, and a guarantee of permanence, and therefore more like a natural virtue.

17. But then, unlike other classes, this class is "a homogeneous class," and therefore it can readily unite. Why and in what sense is labour homogeneous? Is there no homogeneity in the instinct of property? In that instinct, which may be "inert and timid" indeed in promoting some kinds of change, because it is already so well-to-do; but which is lynx-eyed, sensitive, and astute beyond all others, in detecting, and in promoting or obstructing as the case may be, what touches its own peculiar interests. Any political union of the labouring masses can only be brought about by sacrifices of time, which to them are sacrifices of to-morrow's bread; but the leisured classes have their hours and days much, sometimes a great deal too much, at their free disposal. Probably there is no public man among us of Mr. Lowe's standing, or of even a tenth part of his experience, who has been thrown so little into contact with the labouring classes. We must all regret it. Had it been otherwise, it would have been better certainly for them, and possibly for him. This homogeneity is an idol that he has set up, of which not the feet only but the limbs and head are of clay, and the brain of I know not what. Between the Irish and the English quarters of our towns, between the skilled and the unskilled labourer, between the rural peasant and the oppidan artisan, between the political parties into which these are divided,

and again between these and numbers even of literary and professional men, there is, indeed, the tie of a common predicate: they live by their work, and not on their means. But homogeneity has never yet, except in 1831–2, made the labourers, even of the towns, unite. And then they united not for themselves but for others. Why, then, is this dream of hostile and selfish union between them and the far more variant population of the country to frighten us from our propriety?

18. The Reply, however, says they do not want the suffrage; you are thrusting it upon them. It is the old story. When the voice of a petitioner is calm and low, we cannot hear it. When it is full and loud, then we "must not yield to intimidation." The Reply, as usual, dispenses with the evidence on one side, and excludes it on the other. I cannot wonder that it produces none to sustain the *dictum;* for there is none. But on the other side, are there no "agitators," who are "not to be ducked"? Is there not a Press that gives utterance to the voice of Labour, and is not that utterance pretty plain? Are there not from year to year great, though perfectly peaceable, meetings, attended, and that even from a distance, by thousands who can ill afford it? Has not Exeter Hall been filled by, and in the interest of, the rural labourers, last season, under the presidency of Mr. Bright? There are even now at least two members of Parliament who are, in a special sense, the representatives of the working men; and their voice is in utter contradiction to the assurances so confidently given by the member for the University of London.

19. And now as to the demand that is made on us for an instance of a country flourishing and contented where the suffrage is general. Were we to refer to a small country,

the answer would not unfairly be that we could not argue from it to a large one. Let us turn, then, as the Reply turns, to America. And what is here the impeachment? First, a strike, which was not comparable in extent to some English strikes, under the ten-pound suffrage, within the memory of our own generation; and which has ended. Secondly, a civil war brought about, strangely enough, by the action of those among the States associated, in which the right of representation, belonging to the populations numerically, was, under the slave system, given over exclusively to the whites. In the North the war never was a question of class. All classes were alike intent upon it: and the Reply, which dares all that can be dared by those of women born, does not make bold to state that if the suffrage had been limited after its own heart, the limitation would have made the smallest difference. What, on the other hand, can America say *for* her Constitution? That, throughout her vast territory, there is not a man who is not loyal to it. That, in her legislation, the public interest is always preferred to the small interests of class; yet that under it all classes live in habitual harmony. That, whatever may be said of the repulsion of the best citizens from public life, there is no State in the world the affairs of which, foreign and domestic, are transacted with an ability more effective; perhaps we in England have reason to say, more drastic. That, in its hour of agony, that Constitution was put under a strain at the least as severe as any recorded in history, and that it came through that strain unhurt. And this, though America does not possess by any means the same advantages which we happily enjoy, in the recollections of history, in the landmarks of usage, and in the lessons of tradition.

20. Still less happy, if less happy there can be, is the

reference to France. For in that country we have lately seen order menaced, and a Constitution violently strained, by those who sought to escape from the verdict of the extended suffrage; but on the other hand, with a rare self-command and a noble temperance, that order kept in safety, and that Constitution in balance, by the advocates of wide public liberty. After weeks of agonising suspense, at length the end has come. Not a hand was raised to strike, even for freedom; not a word was spoken, that could stir even the least patient into action; and France, rich in every other distinction, but long so slow to make ground in her political education, has achieved a bloodless victory as remarkable, in the peaceful annals of the world, as the most splendid of all her successes on the battle-field can ever be in military history. With the bravery of a defeated Osman Pasha, the head of the State has frankly owned the facts, and has promised, in his message to the Legislature, that the end of this crisis "shall be the starting-point of a new era, and that all the public powers shall co-operate in promoting its development."

21. Finally, the Reply claims "a perfect right to make every supposition consistent with possibility." A claim, which might give a meditative man much food for thought. In the first place, if sauce for the goose it is sauce for the gander; and every supposition consistent with possibility may as reasonably be made in the interest of an extended enfranchisement. Let us assume, however, that it is good; good on both sides. But both the author of the Reply and I have been taught at Oxford that probable evidence is the guide of life; the only guide which it commonly affords. I wish, therefore, that the Reply, which lays claim to an eminently practical character, had informed us how, under this licence, on each side of disputed ques-

tions, to make "every supposition consistent with possibility," the business of life can be carried on. Let us apply it in a few cases. A wife may betray; therefore no one should marry. A friend may deceive; let us renounce all friends. A coachman may break my neck; I never will drive out. A cook may poison me; I will live upon blackberries and acorns. A standing army may put down liberty; let not the House of Commons vote a man. Nor will it avail, in the interests of the Reply, to limit this licence of extravagant hypothesis to cases where the evil is grave, and the position defenceless; no evil is graver to a nation than the extinction of its freedom: the wealthy class cannot be more defenceless against the ravages of an invading peasantry than each member of it is, when, without a qualm, once, twice, or even thrice a day he sits down to table, against his cook. Why does not the Reply adopt at once the outspoken language of Henry the Eighth, who addressed his peasantry as "but brutes and inexpert folk," and say to Lincolnshire labourers now what that very frank sovereign said to them, as Mr. Bright * tells us, in 1537: "How presumptuous are ye, the rude commons of one shire, and that one of the most brute and beastly of the whole realm"?

22. The truth is, the greatest of all the differences between us is in the point of view from which we examine and approach the question of the suffrage. For me, enfranchisement, in the absence of a reasonable bar, is a good; and is only to be foregone upon proof that it will be accompanied and outweighed by some evil, incident to the form in which it is proposed. For those who share the sentiments of the Reply, if I judge them right, it is an evil,

* Bright's *English History*, ii. 406.

only to be encountered for the sake of escaping some other and yet greater evil. I look to it, as augmenting the sum total of forces, enlisted in the nation's interest, and placed at the disposal of the State: they, as multiplying the risks and shocks, to which all human institutions are exposed. Their idea of a Constitution is, that it is a fortress to be gallantly defended by a few; and their idea of a people, that it is a vast army posted round about with hostile intentions, which it is a duty and an honour to resist, as long as resistance can be maintained. We find it easy to decry the political ideas of the ancient Greeks; but those cherished among us are less consistent, and in some respects less rational. They contemplated with acquiescence or approval the evil institution of slavery; but they considered, as the English of a former time considered, that every freeman should have a share in the determination of the laws by which he was to be governed. The spirit of our religion, truly popular as it is, has effaced from our system the very name and idea of the slave; but what if the selfishness of class, inhering in our politics, has prevented us from giving to the idea of freedom that which is its consummation, and to the character of the citizen, in the humbler orders, the amplitude of which it is susceptible?

At any rate we have this undeniable fact full in our view: we withhold the boon of the franchise from that half of our labouring householders which, if a distinction must be drawn, is really and obviously the safer of the two. We withhold it, perhaps with some musty precedents to sustain us, fetched from distant ages and from foreign lands, but not so much as one of them carrying the stamp of true British origin. Failing to find foothold in our history, or within the wide spaces of the probable,

we take refuge in the shadowy regions, *domos vacuas et inania regna*, of all that is "consistent with possibility."

23. While this claim is being made, and while the present paper is being written, Mr. Joseph Arch appears as a fellow-contributor to this Review, and states, in vigorous language, the grievance of the rural labourer. He feels it keenly, and he puts it strongly. He is not likely then to understate, upon this arena of free speech, the wants and wishes of his clients. And what are the portentous demands he makes? More air, more water, more dwellings, weather-proof and accommodated to the purposes of decency and virtue; yet even these by no abstract or communistic standard, only by the extension to the country at large, which he thinks the rural franchise would secure, of the provisions already applied to towns. One, and one only, political proposal, indeed, he makes: it is the alteration of the present laws touching primogeniture and entail; but, in this alarming pretension, what if it should be remarked that Mr. Lowe agrees with him?

24. I earnestly hope that these reiterated accusations of class-purpose, hostile to society in general, against the county householders, may once for all be abandoned: were it only for the reason, that they might lead to retaliation. It is not wise to provoke the examination of the history of our Statute Book, with a view to ascertain and enumerate the instances where the narrow and oblique purposes of class have been pursued by Parliaments in the choice of which the upper orders had it all their own way. Let this question be closed before the adverse critic unrolls the story, under the farmer's eyes, of the substitution of a malt-tax for the older services charged directly on the land; or invites the attention of the labourer to

the course of legislation, since the Revolution as well as before it, upon wages, upon combinations, upon crime, upon army and navy discipline, upon bread. Let bygones be bygones. But bygones they will not be, if ugly phantoms are persistently sent into a field from which it would be too easy finally to drive them by an army of too solid and too sad realities. I have no dreams of a golden age; there will always be more than enough to deplore, more than enough to mend. But let us at least thrust aside the needless difficulty of wanton crimination; and let us labour, in patience and good-will towards all, to handle and direct for the best the movement of our time.

VII.

POSTSCRIPTUM ON THE COUNTY FRANCHISE.*

1. My estimate of the comparative value of the popular judgment in politics has, to use an expression of Milton's, "stumbled some"; and minds in a state of apprehension are apt to magnify the thing itself, which has caused their alarm, as well as the consequences which they expect to flow from it. But I can hardly regret that some limitations have been for a moment forgotten, if the result has been to produce a discussion, in which every contributor has thrown new light upon the case. It is, perhaps, natural that I should prefer to all others the very able papers of Mr. Hutton and Mr. Harrison. To these I am indebted for illustration and defence much better than any I could myself have supplied; but I will give in few words my view of the position up to which competing, but also converging, efforts have brought the general subject.

2. It will now be clearly understood that we are not debating whether government ought to be carried on by the people rather than by the leisured classes. In this country, at least, the people themselves would be the very first to reject such a proposal, if any one could be found

* Reprinted extract from *The Nineteenth Century* for July 1878, Art. XI., "A Modern Symposium." [It was an inconsistency to write this Postscript after my 'Last Words.' But the soft and silken cord, with which the Editor of *The Nineteenth Century* guides his contributors, usually draws them whithersoever he will.—W. E. G., 1878.]

to make it. Neither has it been contended that their powers of political action are superior to those of the limited portions of society, which possess such vast advantages in leisure, tradition, wealth, hereditary aptitude, and every kind of opportunity. Nor even, as might be hastily inferred from the succinct title of this literary *eranos*, that "the popular judgment in 'all kinds of' politics is more just than that of the higher orders." The people are of necessity unfit for the rapid, multifarious action of the administrative mind; unfurnished with the ready, elastic, and extended, if superficial, knowledge which the work of government, in this country beyond all others, demands; destitute of that acquaintance with the world, with the minds and tempers of men, with the arts of occasion and opportunity, in fact, with the whole doctrine of circumstance, which lying outside the matter of political plans and propositions, nevertheless frequently determines not the policy alone, but the duty of propounding them. No people of a magnitude to be called a nation has ever, in strictness, governed itself; the utmost which appears to be attainable, under the conditions of human life, is that it should choose its governors, and that it should, on select and rare occasions, bear directly upon their action. History shows how seldom even this point has in any considerable manner been attained. It is written in legible characters, and with a pen of iron, on the rock of human destiny, that within the domain of practical politics the people must in the main be passive.

3. It would be well if this were all. But I must make a further admission. That teachableness for which most of the writers in this series give them credit will on some occasions, and in some persons on all occasions, degenerate

into, or be replaced by, a degree of subserviency. The greatest, apparently, of all the difficulties in establishing true popular government is the difficulty—it should, perhaps, be said the impossibility—of keeping the national pulse in a state of habitual and healthy animation. At certain junctures it may be raised even to a feverish heat. But these accesses are, in all countries, short and rare; they come and go like the passing wave. The movement is below par a hundred times for once that it is above. The conditions of life bear lightly upon the few, but hard upon the many. To the many, politics of an operative quality are in ordinary times an impossibility, in the most favourable times a burden; but to the few, with their wealth and leisure, they are an easy and healthful exercise, nay often an entertainment and even a luxury, and a seasoning of life. At unexciting seasons, the member of the upper or middle class will usually cleave to his party. But I apprehend that the ties of party, as distinct from those of sympathy, opinion, and personal confidence in leaders, are less felt among the masses than among those in superior circumstances. The present weighs more heavily upon them; and they must have, as a rule, other circumstances being equal, less energy available either for the anticipation of the future, or the retention of the past. Upon the whole then, in the absence of truly great and stirring subjects, the working man, or *popolano*, will very frequently come to the poll with his mind in a rather negative state; and though, setting aside the few baser members of the class, he would not entertain the offer of an undisguised bribe, there is a disguised and standing bribe, which may be said commonly to lie in the hands of superiors in station, especially if this superiority be combined with any personal contact involving mutual interests.

So that we cannot be surprised if the mere desire to please the employer or the landlord, as such, steps into the vacant or lethargic mind, and, for the purpose of directing the vote, stands instead of the reason of the case. This, it will be observed, is a mode of operation quite distinct from legitimate influence, though it is far from being the most illegitimate.

4. Again, I allow it to be possible that in particular cases the mere possession of the suffrage may be a cause of deterioration, and thus of relative unfitness, to the possessor. The superiority of the popular judgment in politics, so far as it is superior, is, according to my view, due mainly to moral causes, to a greater mental integrity, which, again, is greatly owing to the comparative absence of the more subtle agencies of temptation. But the working man, whom Fortune does not taint, and whom it is nobody's interest to corrupt, is one thing; the working man practised upon, courted, flattered, whether by the old-fashioned arts or by the new-fangled Conservative demagoguism now so much in vogue, is another. His little bark will carry no great breadth of canvas; and the puff of factitious adulation will act upon its equilibrium like a squall. Of course I do not speak of those select men who, as Mr. Harrison has so well shown, are the homogeneous and sympathising standard-bearers that Nature has elected, and stamped with her own indisputable *fiat*, to guide the working community from within its own precinct. I speak of the average man, when subject to more than what had thus far been his average danger. On the whole, I admit freely that the deductions from the benefit of popular suffrage are varied and serious. But what we are now contending with is the allegation that it is not a benefit at all, but a mischief.

5. To point the issue still more exactly, let me say that I decline to widen it, as Mr. Lowe would have me, by allowing it to comprehend universal suffrage. The Apostle said, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men;" and Mr. Lowe, with perfectly warrantable tactics, knowing the terrors of universal suffrage, seeks to persuade men thereby. What we want in these papers is conviction rather than persuasion. I therefore put aside universal suffrage, which, without doubt, must include some elements of unimagined horror, elements not yet fully developed, because, as far as I know, it differs from household suffrage only in the free inclusion of lodgers, whether belonging to the family or otherwise. I have never heard of an attempt, as yet, to register those who sleep under the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge. But let us pass by the subject, as one too dreadful to contemplate, and be content to deal with the original matter of debate—namely, the establishment in the counties of the enfranchising law which, ten years ago, we gave to the towns.

6. This being the issue, Mr. Lowe has, in the middle of his short paper, stated the argument from his point of view with his usual exactness. He says the *rationale* is extremely simple; and so far I agree with him. His main contention is, that the member of the lower class is liable to all the sources of error which affect the member of the higher class, and with these *is* "liable to many deceptions from which the other is exempt." He must take most of his opinions at second hand, and "his chance of being right depends on the hands into which he may chance to fall." And Mr. Lowe thinks it a strange paradox to maintain (as indeed it would be if any one did maintain it) that "a man with all the causes of error incident to the

wisest, and several more peculiarly his own, is less liable to error than they." "The wisest," I stop to observe, mean the richest; but the question chiefly at issue is whether wealth, together with its accompaniments, is altogether entitled to this commanding and conclusive panegyric.

7. That the rich have vast advantages, I am among the first to contend: that the very highest and noblest, because most fully and largely developed, specimens of humanity are found among the highest class, I for one believe. But they too have their mob, as well as their elect and favoured specimens. I concede, however, to Mr. Lowe, without hesitation or reluctance, the superiority of their intellectual qualifications; not universally, for among their mob there are many exceptions, but as a whole. There remains behind a grave inquiry, to which it seems to me that the opponents generally have given very insufficient heed. It is whether political judgments are formed by means of intellectual qualifications alone. For if there be another element which helps to determine them in all or in certain cases, it may then prove that the entrance of that element into the case may disturb and overset what, as I freely admit, would otherwise be solid and well-poised computations.

8. Now my stand has been taken on a basis of fact, which no one has attempted to shake. I affirm that, so far as we know the facts, and with a possible exception or two, the popular judgment on the great achievements of the last half-century, which have made our age (thus far) a praise among the ages, has been more just and true than that of the majority of the higher orders. Mr. Lowe alleges that these have been the trophies of "moderate" Liberalism. Sometimes: but this is not true (for example) of the first Reform Act, nor of Negro Emancipation, nor

of Corn Law Repeal, nor of cheap postage, nor of relief of the press from taxes, nor of the further extension of the franchise, nor of the Abolition of Church Rates, nor of Irish disestablishment, nor of the Irish Land Act: not to mention that moderate Liberalism, except on the occasions when it recalcitrates, is as much eschewed by the Tories as the Liberalism dubbed immoderate. So that my proposition stands. Can Mr. Lowe fail to perceive how telling, how grave a fact this is, if it be a fact at all? It is surely one broad enough to sustain the superstructure I have laid upon it, which is simply this: that now, when we have enfranchised one full half of this class, which felt and judged on the greatest matters so much more soundly than we did, and that half the more questionable of the two, it will not be well to withhold the corresponding boon, demanded by equality, by growing intelligence, and by unquestioned docility, from the other moiety. Indeed, until this great basis of fact, on which we stand, can be shaken, it appears to me that we might be warranted in declining to adduce argument on details, and might simply ask our opponents to present their proof that the working population, who, to say the very least, have not opposed the good and great measures that have been so uniformly resisted by the majority of the higher class, ought by rights to be shut out from the franchise which that higher class enjoys.

9. I have indicated that it is, on the whole, in the moral sphere that we are to look for the causes of a superiority, which is within its own limits undeniable. Moral elements of character are as true, and often as powerful a factor, in framing judgments upon matters of human interest and action as intellectual forces. But there is another element in the question not less vital: the character of

the surroundings, the contiguous objects of attraction and repulsion, the beguiling and tempting agencies in the midst of which we live. Those who have but a sufficiency for life set a less value perhaps upon it, and certainly upon its incidental advantages, than persons who live in the midst of superfluities varying from a few to a multitude almost numberless. These superfluities are like the threads that bound down Gulliver to the soil; and they form habits of mind which at length pass into our fixed mental and moral constitution, and cease to form objects of distinct consciousness. If it be true that wealth and ease bring with them in a majority of cases an increased growth in the hardening crust of egotism and selfishness, the deduction thereby made from the capacity of right judgment in large and most important questions, may be greater than the addition which leisure, money, and opportunity have allowed.

10. I touch here upon deep mines of truth, never yet explored, nor within the power of human intelligence to explore fully, though we are taught to believe in an Eye that has observed, and a Mind that has accurately registered the whole. Even in the present twilight of our practical and moral knowledge, we may perceive, by every form of instance, how often the wisdom of love, goodness, and simplicity wins, even in the races of this world, against the wisdom of crafty and astute self-seeking. Even more is this true in the fields of open thought than in the direct and sharp competitions of life. In questions to which his budding knowledge reaches, even the child has often a more serene and effective sense of justice than a grown man; and a partial analogy obtains between the relations of age and those of class. History affords, I think, a grand and powerful illustration of the argument in the case of the acceptance of Christianity; which acceptance will be

admitted, I presume, to have been a great advance upon the road of truth and of human welfare. Was it the wealthy and the learned who, with their vast advantages, and their supposed exemption from special sources of error, outstripped their humbler fellow-creatures in bowing their heads to the authority of the Gospel?* Did scribes and Pharisees, or did shepherds and fishermen, yield the first, most, and readiest converts to the Saviour and the company of His apostles? It was not an arbitrary act, for there is no such act of the Almighty which "hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes." The whole code of our Saviour's teaching on the condition of rich and poor with reference to the acceptance of moral truth is not the rhetoric of an enthusiast, nor the straitened philosophy of a local notable, who mistook the accidents of one time and place for principles of universal knowledge. They were the utterances of the Wisdom that

> "Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
> Spreads undivided, operates unspent."†

11. There was not, be it observed, any denial in the new religion of the intellectual superiority, which, upon the whole or in the majority of cases, attends upon wealth and leisure. But that curtain was lifted which, woven by self-love, hides from us many unpalatable truths. As the barbarian, with his undeveloped organs, sees and hears at distances which the senses of the cultured state cannot overpass, and yet is utterly deficient as to fine details of sound and colour, even so it seems that, in judging of the great questions of policy which appeal to the primal truths and laws of our nature, those classes

* See *sup.* p. 180. † Pope, 'Essay on Man.'

may excel who, if they lack the opportunities, yet escape the subtle perils of the wealthy state. True they receive much of their instruction from persons of the classes above them, from the "minority of the minority"; but this in no way mends the argument on behalf of the majority of the minority, who habitually reject, as it passes by their doors, that teaching which the men of the highways and the hedges as commonly are eager, or ready, to receive.

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY BRANCH OF THE

VIII.

KIN BEYOND SEA.*

"When Love unites, wide space divides in vain,
And hands may clasp across the spreading main."

1. It is now nearly half a century since the works of De Tocqueville and De Beaumont, founded upon personal observation, brought the institutions of the United States effectually within the circle of European thought and interest. They were co-operators, but not upon an equal scale. De Beaumont belongs to the class of ordinary, though able, writers: De Tocqueville was the Burke of his age, and his treatise upon America may well be regarded as among the best books hitherto produced for the political student of all times and countries.

2. But higher and deeper than the concern of the old world at large in the thirteen colonies, now grown into thirty-eight States, besides eight Territories, is the special interest of England in their condition and prospects.

I do not speak of political controversies between them and us, which are happily, as I trust, at an end. I do not speak of the vast contribution, which, from year to year, through the operations of a colossal trade, each makes to the wealth and comfort of the other: nor of the

* Published in the *North American Review* for September 1878. Republished by permission: with one or two notes, and a few corrections, of which a part were sent to the Review, but arrived too late.

friendly controversy, which in its own place it might be well to raise, between the leanings of America to Protectionism, and the more daring reliance of the old country upon free and unrestricted intercourse with all the world. Nor of the menace which, in the prospective development of her resources, America offers to the commercial pre-eminence of England.* On this subject I will only say that it is she alone who, at a coming time, can, and probably will, wrest from us that commercial primacy. We have no *title*, I have no inclination, to murmur at the prospect. If she acquires it, she will make the acquisition by the right of the strongest; but, in this instance, the strongest means the best. She will probably become what we are now, the head servant in the great household of the World, the employer of all employed; because her service will be the most and ablest. We have no more title against her, than Venice, or Genoa, or Holland has had against us. One great duty is entailed upon us, which we, unfortunately, neglect; the duty of preparing, by a resolute and sturdy effort, to reduce our public burdens, in preparation for a day when we shall probably have less capacity than we have now to bear them.

3. Passing by all these subjects, with their varied attractions, I come to another, which lies within the tranquil domain of political philosophy. The students of the future, in this department, will have much to say in the way of comparison between American and British institu-

* [This topic was much more largely handled by me in the Financial Statement which I delivered, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, on May 2, 1866. I recommend attention to the excellent article by Mr. Henderson, in the *Contemporary Review* for October 1878: and I agree with the author in being disposed to think that the protective laws of America effectually bar the full development of her competing power.—W. E. G., Nov. 6, 1878.]

tions. The relationship between these two is unique in history. It is always interesting to trace and to compare Constitutions, as it is to compare languages; especially in such instances as those of the Greek States and the Italian Republics, or the diversified forms of the feudal system in the different countries of Europe. But there is no parallel in all the records of the world to the case of that prolific British mother, who has sent forth her innumerable children over all the earth to be the founders of half-a-dozen empires. She, with her progeny, may almost claim to constitute a kind of Universal Church in politics. But, among these children, there is one whose place in the world's eye and in history is superlative: it is the American Republic. She is the eldest born. She has, taking the capacity of her land into view as well as its mere measurement, a natural base for the greatest continuous empire ever established by man. And it may be well here to mention what has not always been sufficiently observed, that the distinction between continuous empire, and empire severed and dispersed over sea, is vital. The development, which the Republic has effected, has been unexampled in its rapidity and force. While other countries have doubled, or at most trebled, their population, she has risen, during one single century of freedom, in round numbers, from two millions to forty-five. As to riches, it is reasonable to establish, from the decennial stages of the progress thus far achieved, a series for the future; and, reckoning upon this basis, I suppose that the very next Census, in the year 1880, will exhibit her to the world as certainly the wealthiest of all the nations. The huge figure of a thousand millions sterling, which may be taken roundly as the annual income of the United Kingdom, has been reached at a surprising rate; a rate

which may perhaps be best expressed by saying that, if we could have started forty or fifty years ago from zero, at the rate of our recent annual increment, we should now have reached our present position. But while we have been advancing with this portentous rapidity, America is passing us by as if in a canter. Yet even now the work of searching the soil and the bowels of the territory, and opening out her enterprise throughout its vast expanse, is in its infancy. The England and the America of the present are probably the two strongest nations of the world. But there can hardly be a doubt, as between the America and the England of the future, that the daughter, at some no very distant time, will, whether fairer or less fair, be unquestionably yet stronger than the mother.

"O matre forti filia fortior."*

4. But all this pompous detail of material triumphs, whether for the one or for the other, is worse than idle, unless the men of the two countries shall remain, or shall become, greater than the mere things that they produce, and shall know how to regard those things simply as tools and materials for the attainments of the highest purposes of their being. Ascending, then, from the ground floor of material industry towards the regions in which these purposes are to be wrought out, it is for each nation to consider how far its institutions have reached a state, in which they can contribute their maximun to the store of human happiness and excellence. And for the political student all over the world, it will be beyond anything curious as well as useful to examine, with what diversities, as well as what resemblances, of apparatus, the two

* See Hor. Od. I. 16.

greater branches of a race born to command have been minded, or induced, or constrained to work out, in their sea-severed seats, their political destinies according to the respective laws appointed for them.

No higher ambition can find vent in a paper such as this, than to suggest the position and claims of the subject, and slightly to indicate a few outlines, or at least, fragments, of the working material.

5. In many and the most fundamental respects the two still carry in undiminished, perhaps in increasing, clearness, the notes of resemblance that beseem a parent and a child.

Both wish for self-government; and, however grave the drawbacks under which in one or both it exists, the two have, among the great nations of the world, made the most effectual advances towards the true aim of rational politics.

They are similarly associated in their fixed idea that the force, in which all government takes effect, is to be constantly backed, and, as it were, illuminated, by thought in speech and writing. The ruler of St. Paul's time "bare the sword" (Rom. xiii. 4). Bare it, as the Apostle says, with a mission to do right; but he says nothing of any duty, or any custom, to show by reason that he was doing right. Our two governments, whatsoever they do, have to give reasons for it; not reasons which will convince the unreasonable, but reasons which on the whole will convince the average mind, and carry it unitedly forwards in a course of action, often, though not always wise, and carrying within itself provisions, where it is unwise, for the correction of its own unwisdom before it grow into an intolerable rankness. They are governments, not of force only, but of persuasion.

6. Many more are the concords, and not less vital than these, of the two nations, as expressed in their institutions. They alike prefer the practical to the abstract. They tolerate opinion, with only a reserve on behalf of decency; and they desire to confine coercion to the province of action, and to leave thought, as such, entirely free. They set a high value on liberty for its own sake. They desire to give full scope to the principles of self-reliance in the people, and they deem self-help to be immeasurably superior to help in any other form; to be the only help, in short, which ought not to be continually, or periodically, put upon its trial, and required to make good its title. They mistrust and mislike the centralisation of power; and they cherish municipal, local, even parochial liberties, as nursery grounds, not only for the production here and there of able men, but for the general training of public virtue and independent spirit. They regard publicity as the vital air of politics; through which alone, in its freest circulation, opinions can be thrown into common stock for the good of all, and the balance of relative rights and claims can be habitually and peaceably adjusted. It would be difficult, in the case of any other pair of nations, to present an assemblage of traits at once so common and so distinctive, as has been given in this probably imperfect enumeration.

7. There were, however, the strongest reasons why America could not grow into a reflection or repetition of England. Passing from a narrow island to a continent almost without bounds, the colonists at once and vitally altered their conditions of thought, as well as of existence, in relation to the most important and most operative of all social facts, the possession of the soil. In England, inequality lies imbedded in the very base of the social

structure; in America it is a late, incidental, unrecognised product, not of tradition, but of industry and wealth, as they advance with various and, of necessity, unequal steps. Heredity, seated as an idea in the heart's core of Englishmen, and sustaining far more than it is sustained by those of our institutions which express it, was as truly absent from the intellectual and moral store, with which the colonists traversed the Atlantic, as if it had been some forgotten article in the bills of lading that made up their cargoes. Equality combined with liberty, and renewable at each descent from one generation to another, like a lease with stipulated breaks, was the groundwork of their social creed. In vain was it sought, by arrangements such as those connected with the name of Baltimore or of Penn, to qualify the action of those overpowering forces which so determined the case. Slavery itself, strange as it now may seem, failed to impair the theory however it may have imported into the practice a hideous solecism. No hardier republicanism was generated in New England than in the Slave States of the South, which produced so many of the great statesmen of America.

8. It may be said that the North; and not the South, had the larger number of colonists; and was the centre of those commanding moral influences which gave to the country as a whole its political and moral atmosphere. The type and form of manhood for America was supplied neither by the Recusant in Maryland, nor by the Cavalier in Virginia, but by the Puritan of New England; and it would have been a form and type widely different could the colonisation have taken place a couple of centuries, or a single century, sooner. Neither the Tudor, nor even the Plantagenet period, could have supplied its special

form. The Reformation was a cardinal factor in its production; and this in more ways than one.

9. Before that great epoch, the political forces of the country were represented on the whole by the Monarch on one side, and the people on the other. In the people, setting aside the latent vein of Lollardism, there was a general homogeneity with respect to all that concerned the relation of governors and governed. In the deposition of Sovereigns, the resistance to abuses, the establishment of institutions for the defence of liberty, there were no two parties to divide the land. But, with the Reformation, a new dualism was sensibly developed among us. Not a dualism so violent as to break up the national unity, but yet one so marked and substantial, that thenceforward it was very difficult for any individual or body of men to represent the entire English character, and the old balance of its forces. The wrench which severed the Church and people from the Roman obedience left for domestic settlement thereafter a tremendous internal question, between the historical and the new, which in its milder form perplexes us to this day. Except during the short reign of Edward VI., the civil power, in various methods and degrees, took what may be termed the traditionary side, and favoured the development of the historical more than the individual aspect of the national religion. These elements confronted one another during the reigns of the earlier Stuarts, not only with obstinacy but with fierceness. There had grown up with the Tudors, from a variety of causes, a great exaggeration of the idea of Royal power; and this arrived, under James I. and Charles I., at a rank maturity. Not less, but even more masculine and determined, was the converse development. Mr. Hallam saw, and has said, that at the outbreak of the

Great Rebellion, the old British Constitution was in danger, not from one party but from both. In that mixed fabric had once been harmonised the ideas, both of religious duty, and of allegiance as related to it, which were now held in severance. The hardiest and dominating portion of the American Colonists represented that severance in its extremest form, and had dropped out of the order of the ideas, which they carried across the water, all those elements of political Anglicism, which give to aristocracy in this country a position only second in strength to that of freedom. State and Church alike had frowned upon them; and their strong reaction was a reaction of their entire nature, alike of the spiritual and the secular man. All that was democratic in the policy of England, and all that was Protestant in her religion, they carried with them, in pronounced and exclusive forms, to a soil and a scene singularly suited for their growth.

10. It is to the honour of the British Monarchy that, upon the whole, it frankly recognised the facts, and did not pedantically endeavour to constrain by artificial and alien limitations the growth of the infant States. It is a thing to be remembered that the accusations of the colonies in 1776 were entirely levelled at the King actually on the throne, and that a general acquittal was thus given by them to every preceding reign. Their infancy had been upon the whole what their manhood was to be, self-governed and republican. Their Revolution, as we call it, was like ours in the main, a vindication of liberties inherited and possessed. It was a Conservative revolution; and the happy result was that, notwithstanding the sharpness of the collision with the mother-country, and with domestic loyalism, the Thirteen Colonies made provision for their future in conformity, as to all that determined life and

manners, with the recollections of their past. The two Constitutions of the two countries express indeed rather the differences than the resemblances of the nations. The one is a thing grown, the other a thing made: the one a *praxis*, the other a *poiesis:* the one the offspring of tendency and indeterminate time, the other of choice and of an epoch. But, as the British Constitution is the most subtle organism which has proceeded from the womb and the long gestation of progressive history, so the American Constitution is, so far as I can see, the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man. It has had a century of trial, under the pressure of exigencies caused by an expansion unexampled in point of rapidity and range: and its exemption from formal change, though not entire, has certainly proved the sagacity of the constructors, and the stubborn strength of the fabric.

11. One whose life has been greatly absorbed in working, with others, the institutions of his own country, has not had the opportunities necessary for the careful and searching scrutiny of institutions elsewhere. I should feel, in looking at those of America, like one who attempts to scan the stars with the naked eye. My notices can only be few, faint, and superficial; they are but an introduction to what I have to say of the land of my birth. A few sentences will dispose of them.

12. America, whose attitude towards England has always been masculine and real, has no longer to anticipate at our hands the frivolous and offensive criticisms which were once in vogue among us. But neither nation prefers (and it would be an ill sign if either did prefer) the institutions of the other; and we certainly do not contemplate the great Republic in the spirit of mere optimism. We

see that it has a marvellous and unexampled adaptation for its peculiar vocation; that it must be judged, not in the abstract, but under the fore-ordered laws of its existence; that it has purged away the blot with which we brought it into the world; that it bravely and vigorously grapples with the problem of making a Continent into a State; and that it treasures with fondness the traditions of British antiquity, which are in truth unconditionally its own, as well, and as much as they are ours. The thing that perhaps chiefly puzzles the inhabitants of the old country is why the American people should permit their entire existence to be continually disturbed by the business of the Presidential elections; and, still more, why they should raise to its maximum the intensity of this perturbation by providing, as we are told, for what is termed a clean sweep of the entire Civil Service, in all its ranks and departments, on each accession of a Chief Magistrate. We do not perceive why this arrangement is more rational than would be a corresponding usage in this country on each change of Ministry. Our practice is as different as possible. We limit to a few scores of persons the removals and appointments on these occasions; although our Ministries seem to us, not unfrequently, to be more sharply severed from one another in principle and tendency than are the successive Presidents of the great Union.

13. It would be out of place to discuss in this article occasional phenomena of local corruption in the United States, by which the nation at large can hardly be touched: or the mysterious manipulations of votes for the Presidency, which are now understood to be under examination; or the very curious influences which are shaping the politics of the negroes and of the South. These last

are corollaries to the great slave-question; and it seems very possible that after a few years we may see most of the labourers, both in the Southern States and in England, actively addicted to the political support of that section of their countrymen who to the last had resisted their emancipation.

14. But if there be those in this country who think that American democracy means public levity and intemperance, or a lack of skill and sagacity in politics, or the absence of self-command and self-denial, let them bear in mind a few of the most salient and recent facts of history which may profitably be recommended to their reflections. We emancipated a million of negroes by peaceful legislation; America liberated four or five millions by a bloody civil war: yet the industry and exports of the Southern States are maintained, while those of our negro Colonies have dwindled; the South enjoys all its franchises, but we have, *proh pudor!* found no better method of providing for peace and order in Jamaica, the chief of our islands, than by the hard and vulgar, even where needful, expedient of abolishing entirely its representative institutions.

15. The Civil War compelled the States, both North and South, to train and embody a million and a half of men, and to present to view the greatest, instead of the smallest, armed forces in the world. Here there was supposed to arise a double danger. First that, on a sudden cessation of the war, military life and habits could not be shaken off, and, having become rudely and widely predominant, would bias the country towards an aggressive policy, or, still worse, would find vent in predatory or revolutionary operations. Secondly, that a military caste would grow up with its habits of exclusiveness and command, and would influence the tone of politics in a direction

adverse to republican freedom. But both apprehensions proved to be wholly imaginary. The innumerable soldiery was at once dissolved. Cincinnatus, no longer an unique example, became the commonplace of every day, the type and mould of a nation. The whole enormous mass quietly resumed the habits of social life. The generals of yesterday were the editors, the secretaries, and the solicitors of to-day. The just jealousy of the State gave life to the now forgotten maxim of Judge Blackstone, who denounced as perilous the erection of a separate profession of arms in a free country. The standing army, expanded by the heat of civil contest to gigantic dimensions, settled down again into the framework of a miniature with the returning temperature of civil life, and became a power well nigh invisible, from its minuteness, amidst the powers which sway the movements of a society exceeding forty millions.

16. More remarkable still was the financial sequel to the great conflict. The internal taxation for Federal purposes, which before its commencement had been unknown, was raised, in obedience to an exigency of life and death, so as to exceed every present and every past example. It pursued and worried all the transactions of life. The interest of the American debt grew to be the highest in the world, and the capital touched five hundred and sixty millions sterling. Here was provided for the faith and patience of the people a touchstone of extreme severity. In England, at the close of the great French war, the propertied classes, who were supreme in Parliament, at once rebelled against the Tory Government, and refused to prolong the Income Tax even for a single year. We talked big, both then and now, about the payment of our National Debt; but sixty-three years have since elapsed, all of them except two called years of peace, and we have

reduced the huge total by about one-ninth; that is to say, by little over one hundred millions, or scarcely more than one million and a half a year. This is the conduct of a State elaborately digested into orders and degrees, famed for wisdom and forethought, and consolidated by a long experience. But America continued long to bear, on her unaccustomed and still smarting shoulders, the burden of the war taxation. In twelve years she has reduced her debt by one hundred and fifty-eight millions sterling, or at the rate of thirteen millions for every year. In each twelve months she has done what we did in eight years; her self-command, self-denial, and wise forethought for the future have been, to say the least, eightfold ours. These are facts which redound greatly to her honour; and the historian will record with surprise that an enfranchised nation tolerated burdens which in this country a selected class, possessed of the representation, did not dare to face, and that the most unmitigated democracy known to the annals of the world resolutely reduced at its own cost prospective liabilities of the State, which the aristocratic, and plutocratic, and Monarchical Government of the United Kingdom has been contented ignobly to hand over to posterity. And such facts should be told out. It is our fashion so to tell them, against as well as for ourselves; and the record of them may some day be among the means of stirring us up to a policy more worthy of the name and fame of England.

17. It is true, indeed, that we lie under some heavy and, I fear, increasing disadvantages, which amount almost to disabilities. Not, however, any disadvantage respecting power, as power is commonly understood. But, while America has a nearly homogeneous country, and an admirable division of political labour between the States indi-

vidually and the Federal Government, we are, in public affairs, an overcharged and overweighted people.*

We have undertaken the cares of Empire upon a scale, and with a diversity, unexampled in history; and, as it has not yet pleased Providence to endow us with brain-force and animal strength in an equally abnormal proportion, the consequence is that we perform the work of government, as to many among its more important departments, in a very superficial and slovenly manner. The affairs of the three associated Kingdoms, with their great diversities of law, interest, and circumstance, make the government of them, even if they stood alone, a business more voluminous, so to speak, than that of any other thirty-three millions of civilised men. To lighten the cares of the central legislature by judicious devolution, it is probable that much might be done; but nothing is done, or even attempted to be done. The greater Colonies have happily attained to a virtual self-government; yet the aggregate mass of business connected with our colonial possessions continues to be very large. The Indian Empire is of itself a charge so vast, and demanding so much thought and care, that if it were the sole transmarine appendage to the Crown, it would amply tax the best ordinary stock of human energies. Notoriously, it obtains from the Parliament only a small fraction of the attention it deserves. Questions affecting individuals, again, or small interests, or classes, excite here a greater interest, and occupy a larger share of time, than, perhaps, in any other community. In no country, I may add, are the

* [This subject has been more fully developed by me in an article on 'England's Mission,' contributed to *The Nineteenth Century* for September of the present year.—W. E. G., December 1878.]

interests of persons or classes so favoured when they compete with those of the public; and in none are they more exacting, or more wakeful to turn this advantage to the best account. With the vast extension of our enterprise and our trade, comes a breadth of liability not less large, to consider everything that is critical in the affairs of foreign States; and the real responsibilities, thus existing for us, are unnaturally inflated by fast-growing tendencies towards exaggeration of our concern in these matters, and even towards setting up fictitious interests in cases where none can discern them except ourselves, and such Continental friends as practise upon our credulity and our fears for purposes of their own. Last of all, it is not to be denied that in what I have been saying, I do not represent the public sentiment. The nation is not at all conscious of being overdone. The people see that their House of Commons is the hardest-working legislative assembly in the world: and, this being so, they assume it is all right. Nothing pays better, in point of popularity, than those gratuitous additions to obligations already beyond human strength, which look like accessions or assertion of power; such as the annexation of new territory, or the silly transaction known as the purchase of shares in the Suez Canal.

18. All my life long I have seen this excess of work as compared with the power to do it; but the evil has increased with the surfeit of wealth, and there is no sign that the increase is near its end. The people of this country are a very strong people; but there is no strength that can permanently endure, without provoking inconvenient consequences, this kind of political debauch. It may be hoped, but it cannot be predicted, that the mischief will be encountered and subdued at the point where it

will have become sensibly troublesome, but will not have grown to be quite irremediable.

19. The main and central point of interest, however, in the institutions of a country is the manner in which it draws together and compounds the public forces in the balanced action of the State. It seems plain that the formal arrangements for this purpose in America are very different from ours. It may even be a question whether they are not, in certain respects, less popular; whether our institutions do not give more rapid effect, than those of the Union, to any formed opinion, and resolved intention, of the nation.

20. In the formation of the Federal Government we seem to perceive three stages of distinct advancement. First, the formation of the Confederation, under the pressure of the War of Independence. Secondly, the Constitution, which placed the Federal Government in defined and direct relation with the people inhabiting the several States. Thirdly, the struggle with the South, which for the first time, and definitely, decided that to the Union, through its Federal organisation, and not to the State-governments, were reserved all the questions not decided and disposed of by the express provisions of the Constitution itself.* The great *arcanum imperii*, which with us

* [This is a proposition of great importance in a disputed subject-matter; and consequently I have not announced it in a dogmatic manner, but as a portion of what we "seem to perceive" in the progress of the American Constitution. It expresses an opinion formed by me upon an examination of the original documents, and with some attention to the history, which I have always considered, and have often recommended to others, as one of the most fruitful studies of modern politics. This is not the proper occasion to develop its grounds: but I may say that I am not at all disposed to surrender it in deference to one or two rather contemptuous critics.—W. E. G., December 1868.]

belongs to the three branches of the legislature, and which is expressed by the current phrase, "omnipotence of Parliament," thus became the acknowledged property of the three branches of the Federal legislature; and the old and respectable doctrine of State Independence is now no more than an archæological relic, a piece of historical antiquarianism. Yet the actual attributions of the State authorities cover by far the largest part of the province of Government; and by this division of labour and authority, the problem of fixing for the nation a political centre of gravity is divested of a large part of its difficulty and danger, in some proportions to the limitations of the working precinct.

21. Within that precinct, the initiation as well as the final sanction in the great business of finance is made over to the popular branch of the Legislature, and a most interesting question arises upon the comparative merits of this arrangement, and of our own method, which theoretically throws upon the Crown the responsibility of initiating public charge, and under which, until a recent period, our practice was in actual and even close correspondence with this theory.

22. We next come to a difference still more marked. The Federal Executive is born anew of the nation at the end of each four years, and dies at the end. But, during the course of those years, it is independent, in the person both of the President and of his Ministers, alike of the people, of their representatives, and of that remarkable body, the most remarkable of all the inventions of modern politics, the Senate of the United States. In this important matter, whatever be the relative excellences and defects of the British and American systems, it is most certain that nothing would induce the people of this

country, or even the Tory portion of them, to exchange our own for theirs. It may, indeed, not be obvious to the foreign eye what is the exact difference of the two. Both the representative chambers hold the power of the purse. But in America its conditions are such that it does not operate in any way on behalf of the Chamber or of the nation, as against the Executive. In England, on the contrary, its efficiency has been such that it has worked out for itself channels of effective operation, such as to dispense with its direct use, and avoid the inconveniences which might be attendant upon that use. A vote of the House of Commons, declaring a withdrawal of its confidence, has always sufficed for the purpose of displacing a Ministry; nay, persistent obstruction of its measures, and even lighter causes, have conveyed the hint, which has been obediently taken. But the people, how is it with them? Do not the people in England part with their power, and make it over to the House of Commons, as completely as the American people part with it to the President? They give it over for four years: we for a period which on the average is somewhat more: they, to resume it at a fixed time; we, on an unfixed contingency, and at a time which will finally be determined, not according to the popular will, but according to the views which a Ministry may entertain of its duty or convenience.

23. All this is true; but it is not the whole truth. In the United Kingdom, the people as such cannot commonly act upon the Ministry as such. But mediately, though not immediately, they gain the end: for they can work upon that which works upon the Ministry, namely, on the House of Commons. Firstly, they have not renounced, like the American people, the exercise of their power for a given time; and they are at all times free by speech,

petition, public meeting, to endeavour to get it back in full by bringing about a dissolution. Secondly, in a Parliament with nearly 660 members, vacancies occur with tolerable frequency; and, as they are commonly filled up forthwith, they continually modify the colour of the Parliament, comfortably, not to the past, but to the present feeling of the nation; or, at least, of the constituency, which for practical purposes is different indeed, yet not very different. But, besides exercising a limited positive influence on the present, they supply a much less limited indication of the future. Of the members who at a given time sit in the House of Commons, the vast majority, probably more than nine-tenths, have the desire to sit there again, after a dissolution which may come at any moment. They therefore study political weather-wisdom, and in varying degrees adapt themselves to the indications of the sky. It will now be readily perceived how the popular sentiment in England, so far as it is awake, is not meanly provided with the ways of making itself respected, whether for the purpose of displacing and replacing a Ministry, or of constraining it (as sometimes happens) to alter or reverse its policy sufficiently, at least, to conjure down the gathering and muttering storm.

24. It is true, indeed, that every nation is of necessity, to a great extent, in the condition of the sluggard with regard to public policy; hard to rouse, harder to keep aroused, sure after a little while to sink back into his slumber:—

"Pressitque jacentem,
Dulcis et alta quies, placidæque simillima morti."—Æn. vi. 522.

The people have a vast, but an encumbered power; and, in their struggles with overweening authority, or with pro-

perty, the excess of force, which they undoubtedly possess, is more than counterbalanced by the constant wakefulness of the adversary, by his knowledge of their weakness, and by his command of opportunity. But this is a fault lying rather in the conditions of human life than in political institutions. There is no known mode of making attention and inattention equal in their results. It is enough to say that in England, when the nation can attend, it can prevail. So we may say, then, that in the American Union the Federal Executive is independent for each four years both of the Congress and of the people. But the British Ministry is largely dependent on the people whenever the people firmly will it; and is always dependent on the House of Commons, except of course when it can safely and effectually appeal to the people.

25. So far, so good. But if we wish really to understand the manner in which the Queen's Government over the British Empire is carried on, we must now prepare to examine into some sharper contrasts than any which our path has yet brought into view. The power of the American Executive resides in the person of the actual President, and passes from him to his successor. His Ministers, grouped around him, are the servants, not only of his office, but of his mind. The intelligence, which carries on the Government, has its main seat in him. The responsibility of failures is understood to fall on him; and it is round his head that success sheds its halo. The American Government is described truly as a Government composed of three members, of three powers distinct from one another. The English Government is likewise so described, not truly, but conventionally. For in the English Government there has gradually formed itself a fourth power, entering into and sharing the vitality of each of the other three, and

charged with the business of holding them in harmony as they march.

26. This Fourth Power is the Ministry, or more properly the Cabinet. For the rest of the Ministry is subordinate and ancillary; and, though it largely shares in many departments the labours of the Cabinet, yet it has only a secondary and derivative share in the higher responsibilities. No account of the present British Constitution is worth having which does not take this Fourth Power largely and carefully into view. And yet it is not a distinct power, made up of elements unknown to the other three; any more than a sphere contains elements other than those referable to the three co-ordinates, which determine the position of every point in space. The Fourth Power is parasitical to the three others; and lives upon their life, without any separate existence. One portion of it forms a part, which may be termed an integral part, of the House of Lords, another of the House of Commons; and the two conjointly, nestling within the precinct of Royalty, form the inner Council of the Crown, assuming the whole of its responsibilities, and in consequence wielding, as a rule, its powers. The Cabinet is the threefold hinge that connects together for action the British Constitution of King or Queen, Lords, and Commons. Upon it is concentrated the whole strain of the Government, and it constitutes from day to day the true centre of gravity for the working system of the State, although the ultimate superiority of force resides in the representative chamber.

27. There is no statute or legal usage of this country which requires that the Ministers of the Crown should hold seats in the one or the other House of Parliament. It is perhaps upon this account that, while most of my coun-

tryinen would, as I suppose, declare it to be a becoming and convenient custom, yet comparatively few are aware how near the seat of life the observance lies, how closely it is connected with the equipoise and unity of the social forces. It is rarely departed from, even in an individual case; never, as far as my knowledge goes, on a wider scale. From accidental circumstances it happened that I was a Secretary of State between December 1845 and July 1846, without a seat in the House of Commons. This (which did not pass wholly without challenge) is, I believe, by much the most notable instance for the last fifty years; and it is only within the last fifty years that our Constitutional system has completely settled down. Before the reform of Parliament, it was always easy to find a place for a Minister excluded from his seat; as Sir Robert Peel, for example, ejected from Oxford University, at once found refuge and repose at Tamworth. I desire to fix attention on the identification, in this country, of the Minister with the member of a House of Parliament.

28. It is, as to the House of Commons especially, an inseparable and vital part of our system. The association of the Ministers with the Parliament, and through the House of Commons with the people, is the counterpart of their association as Ministers with the Crown and the prerogative. The decisions that they take are taken under the competing pressure of a bias this way and a bias that way, and strictly represent what is termed in mechanics the composition of forces. Upon them, thus placed, it devolves to provide that the Houses of Parliament shall loyally counsel and serve the Crown, and that the Crown shall act strictly in accordance with its obligations to the nation. I will not presume to say whether the adoption of the rule in America would or would not lay the foundation of

a great change in the Federal Constitution; but I am quite sure that the abrogation of it in England would either alter the form of government, or bring about a crisis. That it conduces to the personal comfort of Ministers, I will not undertake to say. The various currents of political and social influences meet edgeways in their persons, much like the conflicting tides in St. George's Channel or the Straits of Dover; for, while they are the ultimate regulators of the relations between the Crown on the one side, and the people through the Houses of Parliament on the other, they have no authority vested in them to coerce or censure either way. Their attitude towards the Houses must always be that of deference; their language that of respect, if not submission. Still more must their attitude and language towards the Sovereign be the same in principle, and yet more marked in form; and this, though upon them lies the ultimate responsibility of deciding what shall be done in the Crown's name in every branch of administration, and every department of policy, coupled only with the alternative of ceasing to be Ministers, if what they may advisedly deem the requisite power of action be denied them.

29. In the ordinary administration of the government, the Sovereign personally is, so to speak, behind the scenes; performing, indeed, many personal acts by the Sign-manual, or otherwise, but, in each and all of them, covered by the counter-signature or advice of Ministers, who stand between the august Personage and the people. There is, accordingly, no more power, under the form of our Constitution, to assail the Monarch in his personal capacity, or to assail through him, the line of succession to the Crown, than there is at chess to put the king in

check. In truth, a good deal, though by no means the whole, of the philosophy of the British Constitution is represented in this central point of the wonderful game, against which the only reproach—the reproach of Lord Bacon—is that it is hardly a relaxation, but rather a serious tax upon the brain.

30. The Sovereign in England is the symbol of the nation's unity, and the apex of the social structure; the maker (with advice) of the laws; the supreme governor of the Church; the fountain of justice; the sole source of honour; the person to whom all military, all naval, all civil service is rendered. The Sovereign owns very large properties; receives and holds, in law, the entire revenue of the State; appoints and dismisses Ministers; makes treaties; pardons crime, or abates its punishment; wages war, or concludes peace; summons and dissolves the Parliament; exercises these vast powers for the most part without any specified restraint of law; and yet enjoys, in regard to these and every other function, an absolute immunity from consequences. There is no provision in the law of the United Empire, or in the machinery of the Constitution, for calling the Sovereign to account; and only in one solitary and improbable, but perfectly defined case—that of his submitting to the jurisdiction of the Pope—is he deprived by Statute of the Throne. Setting aside that peculiar exception, the offspring of a necessity still freshly felt when it was made, the Constitution might seem to be founded on the belief of a real infallibility in its head. Less, at any rate, cannot be said than this. Regal right has, since the Revolution of 1688, been expressly founded upon contract; and the breach of that contract destroys the title to the allegiance of the subject. But no provision, other than the general rule of hereditary

succession, is made to meet either this case, or any other form of political miscarriage or misdeed. It seems as though the Genius of the Nation would not stain its lips by so much as the mere utterance of such a word; nor can we put this state of facts into language more justly than by saying that the Constitution would regard the default of the Monarch, with his heirs, as the chaos of the State, and would simply trust to the inherent energies of the several orders of society for its legal reconstruction.

31. The original authorship of the representative system is commonly accorded to the English race. More clear and indisputable is its title to the great political discovery of Constitutional Kingship. And a very great discovery it is. Whether it is destined, in any future day, to minister in its integrity to the needs of the New World, it may be hard to say. In that important branch of its utility which is negative, it completely serves the purposes of the many strong and rising Colonies of Great Britain, and saves them all the perplexities and perils attendant upon successions to the headship of the Executive. It presents to them, as it does to us, the symbol of unity, and the object of all our political veneration, which we love to find rather in a person, than in an abstract entity, like the State. But the Old World, at any rate, still is, and may long continue, to constitute the living centre of civilisation, and to hold the primacy of the race; and of this great society the several members approximate, in a rapidly extending series, to the practice and idea of Constitutional Kingship. The chief States of Christendom, with only two exceptions, have, with more or less distinctness, adopted it. Many of them, both great and small, have thoroughly assimilated it to their system. The autocracy of Russia, and the Republic of France, each of them con-

genial to the present wants of the respective countries, may yet, hereafter, gravitate towards the principle, which elsewhere has developed so large an attractive power. Should the current, that has prevailed through the last half-century, maintain its direction and its strength, another fifty years may see all Europe adhering to the theory and practice of this beneficent institution, and peaceably sailing in the wake of England.

32. No doubt, if tried by an ideal standard, it is open to criticism. Aristotle and Plato, nay, Bacon, and perhaps Leibnitz, would have scouted it as a scientific abortion. Some men would draw disparaging comparisons between the mediæval and the modern King. In the person of the first was normally embodied the force paramount over all others in the country, and on him was laid a weight of responsibility and toil so tremendous, that his function seems always to border upon the superhuman; that his life commonly wore out before the natural term; and that an indescribable majesty, dignity, and interest surround him in his misfortunes, nay, almost in his degradation; as, for instance, amidst

> "The shrieks of death, through Berkeley's roof that ring,
> Shrieks of an agonising King." *

33. For this concentration of power, toil, and liability, milder realities have now been substituted; and Ministerial responsibility comes between the Monarch and every public trial and necessity, like armour between the flesh and the spear that would seek to pierce it; only this is an armour itself also fleshy, at once living and impregnable. It may be said, by an adverse critic, that the Constitutional Monarch is only a depositary of power, as an

* Gray's 'Bard.'

armoury is a depository of arms; but that those who wield the arms, and those alone, constitute the true governing authority. And no doubt this is so far true, that the scheme aims at associating in the work of government with the head of the State the persons best adapted to meet the wants and wishes of the people, under the conditions that the several aspects of supreme power shall be severally allotted; dignity and visible authority shall lie wholly with the wearer of the crown, but labour mainly, and responsibility wholly, with its servants. From hence, without doubt, it follows that should differences arise, it is the will of those in whose minds the work of government is elaborated, that in the last resort must prevail. From mere labour, power may be severed; but not from labour joined with responsibility. This capital and vital consequence flows out of the principle that the political action of the Monarch shall everywhere be mediate and conditional upon the concurrence of confidential advisers. It is impossible to reconcile any, even the smallest, abatement of this doctrine, with the perfect, absolute immunity of the Sovereign from consequences. There can be in England no disloyalty more gross, as to its effects, than the superstition which affects to assign to the Sovereign a separate, and, so far as separate, transcendental sphere of political action. Anonymous servility has, indeed, in these last days, hinted such a doctrine; * but it is no more practicable to make it thrive in England, than to rear the jungles of Bengal on Salisbury Plain.

34. There is, indeed, one great and critical act, the responsibility for which falls momentarily or provisionally on the Sovereign; it is the dismissal of an existing Ministry,

* *Quarterly Review*, April 1878. Art. I.

and the appointment of a new one. This act is usually performed with the aid drawn from authentic manifestations of public opinion, mostly such as are obtained through the votes or conduct of the House of Commons. Since the reign of George III. there has been but one change of Ministry in which the Monarch acted without the support of these indications. It was when William IV., in 1834, dismissed the Government of Lord Melbourne, which was known to be supported, though after a lukewarm fashion, by a large majority of the existing House of Commons. But the Royal responsibility was, according to the doctrine of our Constitution, completely taken over, *ex post facto*, by Sir Robert Peel, as the person who consented, on the call of the King, to take Lord Melbourne's office. Thus, though the act was rash, and hard to justify, the doctrine of personal immunity was in no way endangered. And here we may notice, that in theory an absolute personal immunity implies a correlative limitation of power, greater than is always found in practice. It can hardly be said that the King's initiative left to Sir R. Peel a freedom perfectly unimpaired. And, most certainly, it was a very real exercise of personal power. The power did not suffice for its end, which was to overset the Liberal predominance; but it very nearly sufficed. Unconditionally entitled to dismiss the Ministers, the Sovereign can, of course, choose his own opportunity. He may defy the Parliament, if he can count upon the people. William IV., in the year 1834, had neither Parliament nor people with him. His act was within the limits of the Constitution, for it was covered by the responsibility of the acceding Ministry. But it reduced the Liberal majority from a number considerably beyond three hundred to about thirty; and it constituted an exceptional, but very real

and large action on the politics of the country, by the direct will of the King. I speak of the immediate effects. Its eventual result may have been different, for it converted a large disjointed mass into a smaller but organised and sufficient force, which held the fortress of power for the six years 1835–41. On this view it may be said that, if the Royal intervention anticipated and averted decay from natural causes, then with all its immediate success, it defeated its own real aim.

35. But this power of dismissing a Ministry at will, large as it may be under given circumstances, is neither the safest, nor the only power which, in the ordinary course of things, falls Constitutionally to the personal share of the wearer of the crown. He is entitled on all subjects coming before the Ministry, to knowledge and opportunities of discussion, unlimited save by the iron necessities of business. Though decisions must ultimately conform to the sense of those who are to be responsible for them, yet their business is to inform and persuade the Sovereign, not to overrule him. Were it possible for him, within the limits of human time and strength, to enter actively into all public transactions, he would be fully entitled to do so. What is actually submitted is supposed to be the most fruitful and important part, the cream of affairs. In the discussion of them, the Monarch has more than one advantage over his advisers. He is permanent, they are fugitive; he speaks from the vantage-ground of a station unapproachably higher; he takes a calm and leisurely survey, while they are worried with the preparatory stages, and their force is often impaired by the pressure of countless detail. He may be, therefore, a weighty factor in all deliberations of State. Every discovery of a blot, that the studies of the Sovereign in the

domain of business enable him to make, strengthens his hands and enhances his authority. It is plain, then, that there is abundant scope for mental activity to be at work under the gorgeous robes of Royalty.

36. This power spontaneously takes the form of influence; and the amount of it depends on a variety of circumstances; on talent, experience, tact, weight of character, steady, untiring industry, and habitual presence at the seat of government. In proportion as any of these might fail, the real and legitimate influence of the Monarch over the course of affairs would diminish; in proportion as they attain to fuller action, it would increase. It is a moral, not a coercive, influence. It operates through the will and reason of the Ministry, not over or against them. It would be an evil and a perilous day for the Monarchy, were any prospective possessor of the Crown to assume or claim for himself final, or preponderating, or even independent power, in any one department of the State. The ideas and practice of the time of George III., whose will in certain matters limited the action of the Ministers, cannot be revived, otherwise than by what would be, on their part, nothing less than a base compliance, a shameful subserviency, dangerous to the public weal, and, in the highest degree, disloyal to the dynasty. Because, in every free State, for every public act, some one must be responsible; and the question is, Who shall it be? The British Constitution answers: The Minister, and the Minister exclusively. That he may be responsible, all action must be fully shared by him. Sole action, for the Sovereign, would mean undefended, unprotected action; the armour of irresponsibility would not cover the whole body against sword or spear; a head would project beyond the awning, and would invite a sunstroke.

37. The reader, then, will clearly see that there is no distinction more vital to the practice of the British Constitution, or to a right judgment upon it, than the distinction between the Sovereign and the Crown. The Crown has large prerogatives, endless functions essential to the daily action, and even the life of the State. To place them in the hands of persons who should be mere tools in a Royal will, would expose those powers to constant unsupported collision with the living forces of the nation, and to a certain and irremediable crash. They are therefore entrusted to men, who must be prepared to answer for the use they make of them. This ring of responsible Ministerial agency forms a fence around the person of the Sovereign, which has thus far proved impregnable to all assaults. The august personage, who from time to time may rest within it, and who may possess the art of turning to the best account the countless resources of the position, is no dumb and senseless idol; but, together with real and very large means of influence upon policy, enjoys the undivided reverence which a great people feels for its head; and is likewise the first and by far the weightiest among the forces, which greatly mould, by example and legitimate authority, the manners, nay the morals, of a powerful aristocracy and a wealthy and highly trained society. The social influence of a Sovereign, even if it stood alone, would be an enormous attribute. The English people are not believers in equality; they do not, with the famous Declaration of July 4th, 1776, think it to be a self-evident truth that all men are born equal. They hold rather the reverse of that proposition. At any rate, in practice, they are what I may call determined inequalitarians; nay, in some cases, even without knowing it. Their natural tendency, from the very base of British

society, and through all its strongly built gradations, is to look upwards: they are not apt to "untune degree." The Sovereign is the highest height of the system; is, in that system, like Jupiter among the Roman gods, first without a second.

"Nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum." *

Not, like Mont Blanc, with rivals in his neighbourhood; but like Ararat or Etna, towering alone and unapproachable. The step downward from the King to the second person in the realm is not like that from the second to the third: it is more even than a stride, for it traverses a gulf. It is the wisdom of the British Constitution to lodge the personality of its chief so high, that none shall under any circumstances be tempted to vie, no, nor dream of vieing, with it. The office, however, is not confused, though it is associated, with the person; and the elevation of official dignity in the Monarch of these realms has now for a testing period worked well, in conjunction with the limitation of merely personal power.

38. In the face of the country, the Sovereign and the Ministers are an absolute unity. The one may concede to the other; but the limit of concessions by the Sovereign is at the point where he becomes willing to try the experiment of changing his Government; and the limit of concession by the Ministers is at the point where they become unwilling to bear, what in all circumstances they must bear while they remain Ministers, the undivided responsibility of all that is done in the Crown's name. But it is not with the Sovereign only that the Ministry must be welded into identity. It has a relation to sustain to the House of

*. Hor. Od. I. xii. 18.

Lords; which need not, however, be one of entire unity, for the House of Lords, though a great power in the State, and able to cause great embarrassment to an Administration, is not able by a vote to doom it to capital punishment. Only for fifteen years, out of the last fifty, has the Ministry of the day possessed the confidence of the House of Lords. On the confidence of the House of Commons it is immediately and vitally dependent. This confidence it must always possess, either absolutely from identity of political colour, or relatively and conditionally. This last case arises when an accidental dislocation of the majority in the Chamber has put the machine for the moment out of gear, and the unsafe experiment of a sort of provisional government, doomed on the one hand to be feeble, or tempted on the other to be dishonest, is tried; much as the Roman Conclave has sometimes been satisfied with a provisional Pope, deemed likely to live for the time necessary to reunite the fractions of the prevailing party.

39. I have said that the Cabinet is essentially the regulator of the relations between King, Lords, and Commons; exercising functionally the powers of the first, and incorporated, in the persons of its members, with the second and the third. It is, therefore, itself a great power. But let no one suppose it is the greatest. In a balance nicely poised, a small weight may turn the scale; and the helm that directs the ship is not stronger than the ship. It is a cardinal axiom of the modern British Constitution, that the House of Commons is the greatest of the powers of the State. It might, by a base subserviency, fling itself at the feet of a Monarch or a Minister; it might, in a season of exhaustion, allow the slow persistence of the Lords, ever eyeing it as Lancelot was eyed by Modred, to invade its just province by baffling its action at some time

propitious for the purpose. But no Constitution can anywhere keep either Sovereign, or Assembly, or nation, true to its trust and to itself. All that can be done has been done. The Commons are armed with ample powers of self-defence. If they use their powers properly, they can only be mastered by a recurrence to the people, and the way in which the appeal can succeed is by the choice of another House of Commons more agreeable to the national temper. Thus the sole appeal from the verdict of the House is a rightful appeal to those from whom it received its commission.

40. This superiority in power among the great State forces was, in truth, established even before the House of Commons became what it now is, representative of the people throughout its entire area. In the early part of the century, a large part of its members virtually received their mandate from members of the Peerage, or from the Crown, or by the direct action of money on a mere handful of individuals, or, as in Scotland for example, from constituencies whose limited numbers and upper-class sympathies usually shut out popular influences. A real supremacy belonged to the House as a whole; but the forces of which it was compounded were not all derived from the people, and the aristocratic power had found out the secret of asserting itself within the walls of the popular chamber, in the dress and through the voices of its members. Many persons of gravity and weight saw great danger in a measure of change like the first Reform Act, which left it to the Lords to assert themselves, thereafter, by an external force, instead of through a share in the internal composition of a body so formidable. But the result proved that they were sufficiently to exercise, through the popular will and choice, the power which they had formerly put

in action without its sanction, though within its proper precinct and with its title falsely inscribed.

41. The House of Commons is superior, and by far superior, in the force of its political attributes, to any other single power in the State. But it is watched; it is criticised; it is hemmed in and about by a multitude of other forces; the force, first of all, of the House of Lords, the force of opinion from day to day, particularly of the highly anti-popular opinion of the leisured men of the metropolis, who, seated close to the scene of action, wield an influence greatly in excess of their just claims; the force of the classes and professions; the just and useful force of the local authorities in their various orders and places. Never was the great problem more securely solved, which recognises the necessity of a paramount power in the body politic to enable it to move, but requires for it a depository such that it shall be safe against invasion, and yet inhibited from aggression.

42. The old theories of a mixed government, and of the three powers, coming down from the age of Cicero, when set by the side of the living British Constitution, are cold, crude, and insufficient to a degree that makes them deceptive. Take them, for example, as represented, fairly enough, by Voltaire: the picture drawn by him is for us nothing but a puzzle:—

> "Aux murs de Vestminster on voit paraître ensemble
> Trois pouvoirs étonnés du nœud qui les rassemble,
> Les députés du peuple, les grands, et le Roi,
> Divisés d'intérêt, réunis par la Loi." *

There is here lacking an amalgam, a reconciling power, what may be called a clearing-house of political forces,

* Henriade, I.

which shall draw into itself everything, and shall balance and adjust everything, and ascertaining the nett result, let it pass on freely for the fulfilment of the purposes of the great social union. Like a stout buffer-spring, it receives all shocks, and within it their opposing elements neutralise one another. This is the function of the British Cabinet. It is perhaps the most curious formation in the political world of modern times, not for its dignity, but for its subtlety, its elasticity, and its many-sided diversity of power. It is the complement of the entire system; a system which appears to want nothing but a thorough loyalty in the persons composing its several parts, with a reasonable intelligence, to insure its bearing, without fatal damage, the wear and tear of ages yet to come.

43. It has taken more than a couple of centuries to bring the British Cabinet to its present accuracy and fulness of development; for the first rudiments of it may sufficiently be discerned in the reign of Charles I. Under Charles II. it had fairly started from its embryo; and the name is found both in Clarendon and in the Diary of Pepys.* It was for a long time without a Ministerial head; the King was the head. While this arrangement subsisted, Constitutional government could be but half established. Of the numerous titles of the Revolution of 1688 to respect, not the least remarkable is this, that the great families of the country, and great powers of the State, made no effort, as they might have done, in the hour of its weakness, to aggrandise themselves at the expense of the Crown. Nevertheless, for various reasons, and among them because of the foreign origin, and absences from time to time, of several Sovereigns, the course of events tended to give

* Vol. v. pp. 94, 95. Ed. London, 1877.

force to the organs of Government actually on the spot, and thus to consolidate, and also to uplift, this as yet novel creation. So late, however, as the impeachment of Sir Robert Walpole, his friends thought it expedient to urge on his behalf, in the House of Lords, that he had never presumed to constitute himself a Prime Minister.

44. The breaking down of the great offices of State by throwing them into commission, and last among them of the Lord High Treasurership after the time of Harley, Earl of Oxford, tended, and may probably have been meant, to prevent or retard the formation of a recognised Chiefship in the Ministry; which even now we have not learned to designate by a true English word, though the use of the imported phrase "Premier" is at least as old as the poetry of Burns. Nor can anything be more curiously characteristic of the political genius of the people, than the present position of this most important official personage. Departmentally, he is no more than the first named of five persons, by whom jointly the powers of the Lord Treasurership are taken to be exercised; he is not their master, or, otherwise than by mere priority, their head: and he has no special function or prerogative under the formal constitution of the office. He has no official rank, except that of Privy Councillor. Eight members of the Cabinet, including five Secretaries of State, and several other members of the Government, take official precedence of him. His rights and duties as head of the Administration are nowhere recorded. He is almost, if not altogether, unknown to the Statute Law.

45. Nor is the position of the body, over which he presides, less singular than his own. The Cabinet wields, with partial exceptions, the powers of the Privy Council, besides having a standing ground in relation to the personal will

of the Sovereign, far beyond what the Privy Council ever held or claimed. Yet it has no connection with the Privy Council, except that every one, on first becoming a member of the Cabinet, is, if not belonging to it already, sworn a member of that body. There are other sections of the Privy Council, forming regular Committees for Education and for Trade. But the Cabinet has not even this degree of formal sanction, to sustain its existence. It lives and acts simply by understanding, without a single line of written law or constitution to determine its relations to the Monarch, or to the Parliament, or to the nation; or the relations of its members to one another, or to their head. It sits in the closest secrecy. There is no record of its proceedings, nor is there any one to hear them, except upon the very rare occasions when some important functionary, for the most part military or legal, is introduced, *pro hac vice*, for the purpose of giving to it necessary information.

46. Every one of its members acts in no less than three capacities: as administrator of a department of State; as member of a legislative chamber; and as a confidential adviser of the Crown. Two at least of them add to those three characters a fourth; for in each House of Parliament it is indispensable that one of the principal Ministers should be what is termed its Leader. This is an office the most indefinite of all, but not the least important. With very little of defined prerogative, the Leader suggests, and in a great degree fixes, the course of all principal matters of business, supervises and keeps in harmony the action of his colleagues, takes the initiative in matters of ceremonial procedure, and advises the House in every difficulty as it arises. The first of these, which would be of but secondary consequence where the assembly had

time enough for all its duties, is of the utmost weight in our overcharged House of Commons, where, notwithstanding all its energy and all its diligence, for one thing of consequence that is done, five or ten are despairingly postponed. The overweight, again, of the House of Commons is apt, other things being equal, to bring its Leader inconveniently near in power to a Prime Minister who is a Peer. He can play off the House of Commons against his chief; and instances might be cited, though they are happily most rare, when he has served him very ugly tricks.

47. The nicest of all the adjustments involved in the working of the British Government is that which determines, without formally defining, the internal relations of the Cabinet. On the one hand, while each Minister is an adviser of the Crown, the Cabinet is an unity, and none of its members can advise as an individual, without, or in opposition actual or presumed to, his colleagues. On the other hand, the business of the State is a hundredfold too great in volume to allow of the actual passing of the whole under the view of the collected Ministry. It is therefore a prime office of discretion for each Minister to settle what are the departmental acts in which he can presume the concurrence of his colleagues, and in what more delicate, or weighty, or peculiar cases, he must positively ascertain it. So much for the relation of each Minister to the Cabinet; but here we touch the point which involves another relation, perhaps the least known of all, his relation to its head.

48. The head of the British Government is not a Grand Vizier. He has no powers, properly so called, over his colleagues: on the rare occasions, when a Cabinet determines its course by the votes of its members, his vote

counts only as one of theirs. But they are appointed and dismissed by the Sovereign on his advice. In a perfectly organised administration, such for example as was that of Sir Robert Peel in 1841–6, nothing of great importance is matured, or would even be projected, in any department without his personal cognisance; and any weighty business would commonly go to him before being submitted to the Cabinet. He reports to the Sovereign its proceedings, and he also has many audiences of the august occupant of the Throne. He is bound, in these reports and audiences, not to counterwork the Cabinet; not to divide it; not to undermine the position of any of his colleagues in the Royal favour. If he departs in any degree from strict adherence to these rules, and uses his great opportunities to increase his own influence, or pursue aims not shared by his colleagues, then, unless he is prepared to advise their dismissal, he not only departs from rule, but commits an act of treachery and baseness. As the Cabinet stands between the Sovereign and the Parliament, and is bound to be loyal to both, so he stands between his colleagues and the Sovereign, and is bound to be loyal to both.

49. As a rule, the resignation of the First Minister, as if removing the bond of cohesion in the Cabinet, has the effect of dissolving it. A conspicuous instance of this was furnished by Sir Robert Peel in 1846; when the dissolution of the Administration, after it had carried the repeal of the Corn Laws, was understood to be due not so much to a united deliberation and decision as to his initiative. The resignation of any other Minister only creates a vacancy. In certain circumstances, the balance of forces may be so delicate and susceptible that a single resignation will break up the Government; but what is the rule

in the one case is the rare exception in the other. The Prime Minister has no title to override any one of his colleagues in any one of the departments. So far as he governs them, unless it is done by trick, which is not to be supposed, he governs them by influence only. But upon the whole, nowhere in the wide world does so great a substance cast so small a shadow; nowhere is there a man who has so much power, with so little to show for it in the way of formal title or prerogative.

50. The slight record that has here been traced may convey but a faint idea of an unique creation. And, slight as it is, I believe it tells more than, except in the school of British practice, is elsewhere to be learned of a machine so subtly balanced, that it seems as though it were moved by something not less delicate and slight than the mainspring of a watch. It has not been the offspring of the thought of man. The Cabinet, and all the present relations of the Constitutional powers in this country, have grown into their present dimensions, and settled into their present places, not as the fruit of a philosophy, not in the effort to give effect to an abstract principle; but by the silent action of forces, invisible and insensible, the structure has come up into the view of all the world. It is, perhaps, the most conspicuous object on the wide political horizon; but it has thus risen, without noise, like the temple of Jerusalem.

> "No workman steel, no ponderous hammers rung;
> Like some tall palm the stately fabric sprung." *

51. When men repeat the proverb which teaches us that "marriages are made in heaven," what they mean is that,

* Heber's 'Palestine.' The word "stately" was in later editions altered by the author to "noiseless."

in the most fundamental of all social operations, the building up of the family, the issues involved in the nuptial contract, lie beyond the best exercise of human thought, and the unseen forces of providential government make good the defect in our imperfect capacity. Even so would it seem to have been in that curious marriage of competing influences and powers, which brings about the composite harmony of the British Constitution. More, it must be admitted, than any other, it leaves open doors which lead into blind alleys; for it presumes, more boldly than any other, the good sense and good faith of those who work it. If, unhappily, these personages meet together, on the great arena of a nation's fortunes, as jockeys meet upon a racecourse, each to urge to the uttermost, as against the others, the power of the animal he rides, or as counsel in a court, each to procure the victory of his client, without respect to any other interest or right; then this boasted Constitution of ours is neither more nor less than a heap of absurdities. The undoubted competency of each reaches even to the paralysis or destruction of the rest. The House of Commons is entitled to refuse every shilling of the Supplies. That House, and also the House of Lords, is entitled to refuse its assent to every Bill presented to it. The Crown is entitled to make a thousand Peers to-day and as many to-morrow: it may dissolve all and every Parliament before it proceeds to business; may pardon the most atrocious crimes; may declare war against all the world; may conclude treaties involving unlimited responsibilities, and even vast expenditure, without the consent, nay without the knowledge, of Parliament, and this not merely in support or in development, but in reversal, of policy already known to and sanctioned by the nation. But

the assumption is that the depositaries of power will all respect one another; will evince a consciousness that they are working in a common interest for a common end; that they will be possessed, together with not less than an average intelligence, of not less than an average sense of equity and of the public interest and rights. When these reasonable expectations fail, then, it must be admitted, the British Constitution will be in danger.

52. Apart from such contingencies, the offspring only of folly or of crime, this Constitution is peculiarly liable to subtle change. Not only in the long-run, as man changes between youth and age, but also, like the human body, with a quotidian life, a periodical recurrence of ebbing and flowing tides. Its old particles daily run to waste, and give place to new. What is hoped among us is, that which has usually been found, that evils will become palpable before they have grown to be intolerable.

53. There cannot, for example, be much doubt among careful observers that the great conservator of liberty in all former times, namely, the confinement of the power of the purse to the popular chamber, has been lamentably weakened in its efficiency of late years; weakened in the House of Commons, and weakened by the House of Commons. It might indeed be contended that the House of Commons of the present epoch does far more to increase the aggregate of public charge than to reduce it. It might even be a question whether the public would take benefit if the House were either entrusted annually with a great part of the initiative, so as to be really responsible to the people for the spending of their money; or else were excluded from part at least of its

direct action upon expenditure, intrusting to the executive the application of given sums which that executive should have no legal power to exceed.

54. Meantime, we of this island are not great political philosophers; and we contend with an earnest, but disproportioned, vehemence about changes which are palpable, such as the extension of the suffrage, or the redistribution of Parliamentary seats, neglecting wholly other processes of change which work beneath the surface, and in the dark, but which are even more fertile of great organic results. The modern English character reflects the English Constitution in this, that it abounds in paradox; that it possesses every strength, but holds it tainted with every weakness; that it seems alternately both to rise above and to fall below the standard of average humanity; that there is no allegation of praise or blame which, in some one of the aspects of its many-sided formation, it does not deserve; that only in the midst of much default, and much transgression, the people of this United Kingdom either have heretofore established, or will hereafter establish, their title to be reckoned among the children of men, for the eldest born of an imperial race.

55. In this imperfect survey, I have carefully avoided all reference to the politics of the day and to particular topics, recently opened, which may have undergone a great development even before these lines appear in print on the other side of the Atlantic. Such reference would, without any countervailing advantage, have lowered the strain of these remarks, and would have complicated with painful considerations a statement essentially impartial and general in its scope.

56. For the yet weightier reason of incompetency, I have avoided the topics of chief present interest in America,

including that proposal to tamper with the true monetary creed which (as we should say) the Tempter lately presented to the nation in the Silver Bill. But I will not close this paper without recording my conviction that the great acts, and the great forbearances, which immediately followed the close of the Civil War form a group which will ever be a noble object, in his political retrospect, to the impartial historian; and that, proceeding as they did from the free choice and conviction of the people, and founded as they were on the very principles of which the multitude is supposed to be least tolerant, they have, in doing honour to the United States, also rendered a splendid service to the general cause of popular government throughout the world.*

* [In reply to the intended work of Mr. Adams on the Constitution of the United States, Mr. Livingstone, under the title of a Colonist of New Jersey, published an Examination of the British Constitution, and compared it unfavourably as it had been exhibited by Adams, and by Delolme, with the institutions of his own country. In this work, of which I have a French translation (London and Paris, 1789), there is not the smallest inkling of the action of our political mechanism, such as I have endeavoured to describe it. On this subject I need hardly refer the reader to the valuable work of Mr. Bagehot, entitled 'The English Constitution,' or to the Constitutional History of Sir T. Erskine May.—W. E. G., December 1878.]

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